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**THE LIFE OF  
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA  
IN TWO VOLUMES**

**VOL. II**



# THE LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

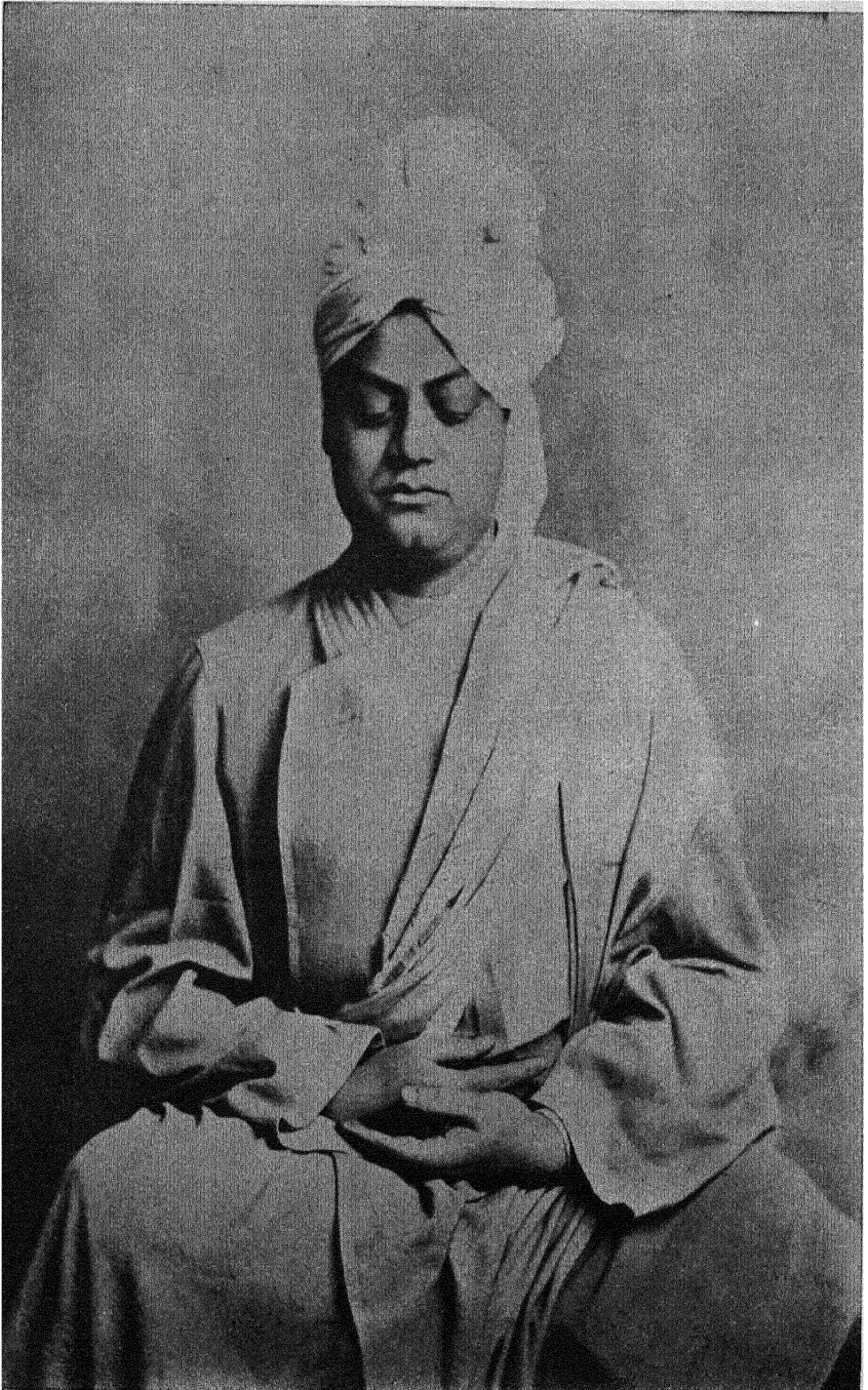
*By*

HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN DISCIPLES

VOL. II



ADVAITA ASHRAMA  
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

## XXVI

### BACK TO LONDON AND A TOUR OF THE CONTINENT

On April 15, 1896, Swami Vivekananda left New York for London. A pleasant surprise awaited him there. Swami Saradananda had arrived from Calcutta on April 1 and was the guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. For several years the Swami had not seen any of his Gurubhâis. So his meeting with Swami Saradananda was an event of great joy. Swami Saradananda brought all the news from India. He told his brother-monk about the monastery in Alam-bazar and of every one of the Gurubhâis. The Swami was full of plans at the time which he communicated to his brother-monk who was lost in wonder at his indefatigable energy and his apostolic fervour.

The Swami himself foresaw the success that lay before him on his second visit to England. All who had known him during his previous sojourn in London welcomed him back most cordially. Together with Swami Saradananda he made his home in St. George's Road, as the guest of Miss Muller and Mr. Sturdy. Soon he found himself teaching privately and preaching publicly; and the fame of his personality and utterances travelled wide. In a short time many persons of distinction, students of comparative religion and earnest seekers after truth were visiting his quarters and he was introduced to many new people who became his followers. He talked to them of the philosophies of India and their relation to modern life and explained to them the various forms of Yoga, and gathered round him a considerable number of

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people desirous of seriously studying the problem of human existence in their light.

In the beginning of May, 1896, the Swami began his regular classes, lecturing mostly on Jnâna Yoga, or the Path of Wisdom. Towards the end of May, he inaugurated a series of Sunday lectures in one of the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, in Picadilly. The subjects were, "The Necessity of Religion," "A Universal Religion," and "The Real and the Apparent Man." These three lectures proving a great success, another course was arranged for in Princes' Hall for Sunday afternoons from the end of June to the middle of July. Among these lectures were "Bhakti Yoga," "Renunciation," and "Realisation." Besides these, the Swami held regularly every week five classes at which the attendance was uniformly good, and on Friday evenings a question-and-answer class, which was especially educative. In his first series of class lectures he dealt mainly with the history of the Aryan race, its developments, its religious advance, and the diffusion of its religious influence. Besides his class lectures on Jnâna Yoga, he gave a course of lessons on Râja Yoga. Then followed a series of discourses on Bhakti Yoga. Shorthand reports of these lectures were taken down by Mr. Goodwin.

But all these classes and Sunday lectures and interviews did not by any means cover the whole of the work the Swami was doing in England. He lectured also in many drawing-rooms, and at several well-known clubs. At the invitation of Mrs. Annie Besant he spoke at her lodge in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, on Bhakti. He also delivered an address on "The Hindu Idea of Soul" at the residence of Mrs. Martin.

The Swami also spoke at Notting Hill Gate at the



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residence of Mrs. Hunt, as well as at Wimbledon, when a good deal of helpful discussion followed the lecture and several other meetings of a similar nature were arranged for. At the Sesame Club, he delivered an address on "Education." Swami Saradananda writing to the *Brahmavâdin* of June 6, says:

"Swami Vivekananda has made a good beginning here. A large number of people attend his classes regularly and the lectures are most interesting. Canon Haweis, one of the leaders of the Anglican Church, came the other day and was much interested. He had seen the Swami before at the Chicago Fair, and loved him from that time. On Tuesday last the Swami lectured on Education at the Sesame Club. It is an important club organised by women for the education of their sex. In this he dealt with the old educational systems of India, pointed out clearly and impressively that the sole aim of the system was 'man-making' and not cramming, and compared it with the present system."

The Swami was warmly received at the residence of Canon Wilberforce, where a levee was held in his honour, in which many distinguished ladies and gentlemen took part.

Mr. Eric Hammond in recording his reminiscences of the Swami's visit to London and especially of a lecture before a club says:

"On his arrival in London, Swami Vivekananda was welcomed in the quiet, thoughtful, semi-calculating way to which Londoners generally habituate themselves. Perhaps the Missionary, everywhere, is met by an atmosphere not exactly antagonistic, but, at the best, doubtful. That Swamiji recognised this element of doubt and of wonderment is certain, and it is certain too, that his winning personality cleared a way through it and found glad welcome in many hearts.

"Clubs, societies, drawing-rooms opened their doors to him. Sets of students grouped themselves together in this quarter and that, and heard him at appointed intervals. His hearers, hearing him, longed to hear further.

"At one of these meetings, at the close of his address, a white-haired and well-known Philosopher said to the Swami,

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'You have spoken splendidly, sir, and I thank you heartily, but you have told us nothing new.' The lecturer's sonorous tones rang through the room in reply, 'Sir, I have told you the Truth. That, the Truth, is as old as the immemorial hills, as old as humanity, as old as the Creation, as old as the Great God. If I have told it in such words as will make you think, make you live up to your thinking, do I not do well in telling it?' The murmur of 'Hear! Hear!' and the louder clapping of hands showed how completely the Swami had carried his audience with him. One lady present on that occasion, and on many more, said, 'I have attended church services regularly all my life. Their monotony and lack of vitality had made them barren and distasteful. I went to them because others went and one hates to be peculiar. Since I heard the Swami, light has flooded into religion. It is real; it lives; it has a new glad meaning and is altogether transformed for me.'

" 'I will tell you how *I* came to know the Truth,' continued the Swami, and in the telling they learned something of the earth-life of Sri Ramakrishna; the sublime simplicity of his character; his indefatigable search for Truth in this religious phase and that; his discovery and his fine proclamation of it:— 'Where I am, there the Truth is!'

" 'I found Truth,' said the Swami, 'because I had it in my heart already. Do not deceive yourselves. Do not imagine you will find it in one creed or in another creed. It is within you. Your creed will not give it to you, *you* must give it to your creed. Men and priests give it various names. They bid you believe one thing and another thing. Listen:—you have it within yourself, this pearl of great price. That which exists is one. Listen:—'Thou art That!'

"From first to last of this address he dwelt on the message of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. He had, he said, not one little word of his own to utter, not one infinitesimal thought of his own to unfold. Everything, every single thing, all he was himself, all he could be to us, all he might be to the world, came from that single source; from the pure soul, from the illimitable inspiration who, seated 'there in my beloved India, had solved the tremendous secret and bestowed the solution broadcast, ungrudgingly, with divine prodigality.'

"In passages of exquisite eloquence he dilated upon Sri Ramakrishna. Self was utterly forgotten, altogether ignored. 'I am what I am, and what I am is always due to him, whatever in me or in my words is good and true and eternal came to me from his mouth, his heart, his soul. Sri Ramakrishna is

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the spring of this phase of the earth's religious life, of its impulses and its activities. If I can show the world one glimpse of my Master I shall not live in vain.' "

One cannot read the above eloquent tribute of the Swami to his Master without noting a beautiful phase of his character—how even in the midst of his triumphs when he was himself hailed on all sides as Master, he again and again pointed out in all humility that he was only a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna at whose feet he had learned everything, that the credit of his teaching was not his but was due to his Master. It is only a true disciple that can be a true Master.

The Indian students resident in London naturally looked to him for guidance. The Swami endeared himself to them all by making them feel quite at home with him and helping them in various ways. And so when on July 18, a social conference of Indian residents in Great Britain and Ireland was held under the auspices of the London Hindu Association, it was he who was asked to preside. The subject of the discourse was, "The Hindus and Their Needs." At this meeting many English ladies and gentlemen were present.

The Swami worked indefatigably in these days, even more than he had done during his previous visit. It must be noted that even at that time in the midst of his multifarious activities he had devoted a good deal of his time in helping Mr. Sturdy in his translation of the "Nârada Sûtras" on Bhakti Yoga. The book which was published about this time, with copious commentaries by the Swami, was deservedly popular.

One of the memorable events, during the Swami's stay in London, was his meeting with the celebrated Orientalist, Professor Max Müller of Oxford University, at his residence, by special invitation, on May 28. Of that pleasant experience the Swami

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himself wrote as follows to the *Brahmavâdin* on June 6:

“ . . . What an extraordinary man is Professor Max Muller! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Sri Ramakrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to that person I hold as a pilgrimage. . . .

“The Professor was first induced to inquire about the power behind, which led to sudden and momentous changes in the life of the late Keshub Chandra Sen, the great Brahmo leader; and since then, he has been an earnest student and admirer of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. ‘Ramakrishna is worshipped by thousands today, Professor,’ I said. ‘To whom else shall worship be accorded, if not to such?’ was his answer. The Professor was kindness itself, and asked Mr. Sturdy and myself to lunch with him. He showed us several colleges in Oxford, and the Bodleian Library. He also accompanied us to the railway station, and all this he did because, as he said, ‘It is not every day one meets with a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.’

“The visit was really a revelation to me. That nice little house, its setting of a beautiful garden, the silver-headed sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child’s in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India—the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our Brahmarshis and Râjarshis, the days of the great Vânaprasthas, the days of Arundhatis and Vasishthas.

“It was neither the Philologist nor the Scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realising its oneness with the Brahman, a heart, that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. . . .

“ . . . And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland. Endued with an extraordinary, and, at the same time, an intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest

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of Sanskrit literature with deep interest and heart-felt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and coloured his whole being. Max Müller is a Vedântist of Vedântists. . . .

“ ‘When are you coming to India? Every heart there would welcome one who has done so much to place the thoughts of their ancestors in the true light,’ I said. The face of the aged sage brightened up—there was almost a tear in his eye, a gentle nodding of the head, and slowly the words came out,—‘I would not return then; you would have to cremate me there.’ Further questions seemed an unwarrantable intrusion into realms wherein are stored the holy secrets of man’s heart.”

This letter was written by the Swami shortly after the Professor had written an article, from information gathered in India, concerning Sri Ramakrishna, which was to appear in the *Nineteenth Century*, entitled “A Real Mahâtman.” Out of the enthusiasm with which the Swami had inspired him, he asked, “What are you doing to make him known to the world?” He was anxious to know more concerning the Master and said that he would be glad to write a larger and fuller account of his life and teachings, provided ampler facts and details were given him. The Swami at once commissioned Swami Saradananda to get into communication with India and to collect as much as was possible of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and of the facts concerning his life. This was done; and the Professor set to work at once and embodied them in a book which has been published under the title, “The Life and Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna.” This book breathes a fervid devotional and yet critical spirit, and contains a number of the Master’s sayings. It has aided materially in giving the Swami and his mission a firmer hold on the English-speaking world. The Swami and the Professor were frequent correspondents and fast friends. Only in matters of philosophical criticism did they sometimes differ.

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The Swami was in the highest spiritual moods during his stay in London. Oftentimes he was all radiance and ecstasy, with infinite love and sympathy for everybody and everything, and nothing better illustrates this than a letter dated July 6, which he addressed to Mr. Francis H. Leggett in the endearing term of "Frankincense," and which reads as follows:

"... Things are going on with me very well on this side of the Atlantic.

"The Sunday lectures were quite successful, so were the classes. The season has ended and I too am thoroughly exhausted. I am going to make a tour in Switzerland with Miss Muller. . . .

"... Well, the work is growing silently yet surely in England. Almost every other man or woman came to me and talked about the work. This British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine, and they will spread all over the world. Of course, all great work is slow and the difficulties are too many, especially as we Hindus are the conquered race. Yet, that is the very reason why it is bound to work; for spiritual ideals have always come from the downtrodden. Jews overwhelmed the Roman Empire with their spiritual ideals. You will be pleased to know that I am also learning my lessons every day in patience and, above all, in sympathy. I think I am beginning to see the Divine, even inside the haughty, 'Anglo-Indians.' I think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very 'Devil' himself, if there were any.

"At twenty I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic; I would not walk on the footpath, on the theatre-side of the streets in Calcutta. At thirty-three I can live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them. Is it degenerate? Or is it that I am broadening out into that Universal Love which is the Lord Himself? Again, I have heard that if one does not see the evil around him, he cannot do good work—he lapses into a sort of fatalism. I do not see that. On the other hand, my power of work is immensely increasing and becoming immensely effective. Some days I get into a sort

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of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion. I am in one of these moods now, dear Francis, and am actually shedding tears of joy at the thought of your and Mrs. Leggett's love and kindness to me. I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here; and that Love Infinite that brought me into being, has guarded every one of my actions good or bad (don't be frightened), for what am I, what was I ever but a tool in His hands?—for whose service I have given up everything,—my beloved ones, my joy, my life. He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe! What reason binds Him? He the Playful One is playing these tears and laughers over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

"It is a funny world and the funniest chap you ever saw is He,—the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play! They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

"I have learnt a thing or two: beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the 'Love,' the 'Beloved.' Aye, 'Sakê,' fill up the cup and we will be mad.

Yours ever in madness,  
Vivekananda."

*Here one has Swami Vivekananda himself.* We see him in a mood, almost akin to the ecstasy of Saint Francis of Assisi, or bordering on that Divine Madness which possessed the Sufis of old, as he speaks of his Beloved Lord.

But returning to a consideration of the Swami's work it will be hard to gauge the import and character of it and the interest it created in London. It was more spiritual than organised. Many ministers of the Gospel and distinguished clergymen were caught up in the grandeur and the freshness of the thought he sent forth. Distinguished intellectual and society people were captivated until it seemed as if

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some great movement was about to be born in his name. He conferred the spirit, leaving the form to be organised later, in whatsoever way it might be possible. He often said of himself that he was not an organiser, but a preacher and a monk; and it is in this sense that his work in England must be regarded.

But apart from the public significance of the Swami's work in London, his second visit is memorable for, he made then some of the most valuable contacts of his life and gathered to his fold some of the most diligent and heroic workers and helpers in his cause. True, in his previous visit he had made acquaintances which ripened into friendship with such talented souls as Miss Henrietta Muller, Miss M. E. Noble, Mr. E. T. Sturdy and others, but now they became his disciples, ready to sacrifice everything for him and his cause. To this group were added two of his most faithful disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, of whom we shall often have occasion to speak later. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier met Swamiji soon after his arrival in London, having heard from a mutual friend that a Hindu preacher was going to hold classes on Eastern philosophy. Both of them were earnest students of religion and sought for the Highest Truth in various sects and creeds, but none of these satisfied the yearning of their souls. They were disappointed with the forms and theological dogmas which passed under the name of religion. So it was with expectant hearts that they came to listen to the exposition of a new religion from the lips of an "Indian Yogi." What was the surprise of the devoted couple to find on comparing notes that they, when hearing the Swami, had felt intuitively and simultaneously thus, "This is the man and this is the philosophy that we have been seeking in vain all through our life." What appealed to them most



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was, the Advaita philosophy. The very first time they met the Swami in private, the latter addressed Mrs. Sevier as "Mother,"—and asked her, "Would you not like to come to India? I will give you of my best realisations." From that day they looked upon the Swami not only as their Guru but as their own son. Thus was established a relationship which was to bring forth inestimable fruits in the fulfilment of one of the Swami's great missions to the West. Indeed, he held Sister Nivedita, J. J. Goodwin and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier as the fairest flowers of his work in England.

Exhausted with the strenuous exertions of his London work the Swami accepted the invitation of three of his more intimate friends for a tour and a holiday on the Continent. He was "as delighted as a child" at the prospect. Those who planned the Swami's holiday and accompanied him on his tour, were Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Sevier and Miss Henrietta Muller. For some time, they had been urging the Swami to rest for they felt that he could not endure much longer the strain of his work. Then, too, it was the holiday season for London in general; and many of the Swami's students and admirers were leaving the metropolis for seaside or mountain resorts. When the suggestion was made to him, the Swami readily assented. He was particularly eager to visit Switzerland. He said, "O! I long to see the snows and wander on the mountain paths!"

So in the afternoon of one of the last days in July, the Swami and his friends left London with the best wishes of all his students and disciples. Arriving at Dover, the party took passage to Calais. The English Channel, often choppy, chanced on this occasion to be comparatively calm. In order to break the long journey between Calais and Geneva the

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travellers spent the night in Paris. On the following day, they resumed their journey, arriving in excellent spirits at Geneva. The Hotel at which the party found accommodation overlooked the beautiful and peaceful lake. The cool invigorating air, the intense blue of the waters, the sky and the fields, the picturesque of the houses, and the novelty of things about him deeply appealed to the Swami.

Geneva is a great bathing-resort, and the Swami availed himself twice of the opportunity for full water bathing. A visit to the Castle of Chillon ended a three days' sojourn in this historic city. They originally intended to remain longer, but the programme was suddenly changed, and we next find the travellers in the far-famed retreat of Chamounix, some forty miles away. When they approached this place the grand spectacle of Mont Blanc opened up to view, presenting a vision which the Swami said he had not enjoyed even amidst the Himalayas. He cried out, "This is really wonderful! Here we are actually in the midst of the snows. In India the snows are so far distant. One walks for days and days amidst the mountains to come near them. But then, these are mere hills compared with those mighty peaks that tower on the borders of Tibet. Yet this is beautiful! Come! let us make the ascent of Mont Blanc." But the guides told them that only skilled mountaineers should attempt such a feat. This was a disappointment to the Swami, but as he gazed through the telescope and saw the appallingly steep ascents, he granted that it was impracticable. However, he was bent on crossing a glacier at all costs. Without this, he felt, his visit to Switzerland would be incomplete. Fortunately the famous Mer-de-Glace was within easy approach. Accordingly several days later, the party travelled on mules to the village whence the passage

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over the glacier begins. The actual expedition was not so pleasant as the Swami had anticipated. It was difficult to keep his footing, even though he admired the beautiful green tints of the crevasses. They were appallingly deep and so beyond reach. When the glacier proper is crossed a very steep ascent must be climbed to reach the village above. It was here that the Swami suffered from vertigo for the first time in his life. This vertigo made it very unsafe and he was glad when he reached the little chalet at the summit without any untoward accident.

The Swami observing the characteristics of the peasantry, remarked to his friends, "Why, these people in many of their manners and in their costumes remind me of the peasants in the hills of the Himalayas! Those long baskets that the people carry on their backs are exactly like those used in the mountainous districts of my country." It was in the Himalayas of Europe that those who were to be the founders of the Advaita Ashrama and dedicate their lives to it, heard for the first time of the Swami's longing to establish a monastery in the heart of his beloved Himalayas. He said, "O, I long for such a monastery where I can retire from the labours of my life and pass the rest of my days in meditation. It will be a centre for work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together and then I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedânta to the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India." A thought, something akin to vision, crossed the minds of his disciples; and Mr. Sevier, speaking for himself and his wife, said, "How nice it would be, Swamiji, if this could be done. We must have such a monastery!" At the time, it was only a passing remark, but as the months went by, that stray remark made

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in the heights of the Alps, was seen to have been prophetic, for so deep had the idea sunk into the hearts of those disciples that the Swami's great desire was fulfilled through their practical help and co-operation.

From Chamounix, the travellers visited the village of Little Saint Bernard. High above rises the famous Saint Bernard Pass, on the crest of which stands the celebrated hospice of the Augustinian monks, the highest inhabited spot in Europe. At the request of Miss Muller, the party next wandered on to an interesting retreat some miles away, where a sojourn of two weeks was made. The Swami was at his best in this village, nestling in the Alps. On all sides rose the snow-capped peaks; all about was the silence and the peace of village life. No rude note of worldliness crept in here. It was here that the Swami enjoyed some of the most lucid and luminous spiritual moments of his life. He seemed far, far away from all worldly concerns. The world and all thought of work were forgotten entirely. He was not even the Teacher, but the silent, meditating monk of old. Many times he walked silently on the mountain paths and his friends seemed to be caught up with him in a world of meditation and of peace. One of those who were with him in this wondrous fortnight says, "There seemed to be a great light about him, and a great stillness and peace. Never have I seen the Swami to such advantage. He seemed to communicate spirituality by a look or with a touch. One could almost read his thoughts which were of the highest, so transfigured had his personality become!"

Two weeks of this quiet life completely restored the Swami. There was only one incident of a slightly disturbing character. He had been walking one morning with his friends, reciting and translating

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passages from the Upanishads, creating in the Alps an Indian atmosphere. On this morning, lost in reverent contemplation he gradually dropped behind. After some short time, they saw him approaching rapidly, calling out in great excitement, "I have been saved by the grace of the Lord! I nearly fell over a precipice. I was walking along, planting my alpenstock firmly on the ground. Suddenly it broke through into a deep crevice and I almost fell over the precipice. Certainly it was only a miracle that saved me!" His friends were greatly agitated when they heard this and congratulated themselves and the Swami over his marvellous escape. Thenceforth they took special care never again to leave him alone.

On the way homewards, there was a little mountain chapel. As the Swami saw it, he said quietly, "Do let us offer some flowers at the feet of the Virgin!" His face shone with great tenderness and he went forth, one of the party accompanying him, and gathered some Alpine flowers. "Offer them at the feet of the Virgin," he said to Mrs. Sevier, "as a token of my gratitude and devotion." And with a strange note of religious certainty, he added, "For She also is the Mother." He would have offered them himself, but feared that the fact that he was not a Christian might cause trouble.

At this out-of-the-way village in Switzerland the Swami received news, which changed the course of his continental tour; it was in the form of an urgent letter from the well-known Orientalist, Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel. He had written to the Swami's London address, cordially inviting him to visit him at his residence in Kiel. The Professor had been studying the Swami's lectures and utterances, and found in him an original thinker and a spiritual genius. Deeply interested as he was in the

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Vedânta philosophy, and having recently returned from Hindusthan itself, he naturally desired to meet the Swami to discuss philosophical questions with him. The Swami therefore made plans to go to Kiel before returning to England. But his hosts insisted that he should complete his Swiss tour before going to Kiel, and arranged that he should also see something of Germany on the way. Urgent business, however, compelled Miss Muller to leave the party at Lucerne, the destination next in view.

At Lucerne, visits were paid to all the places of interest and, with the exception of Mr. Sevier, all made the ascent of Mount Rigi by the mountain railway, a fascinating experience, the view from the summit commanding one of the finest snow vistas in the world. He was now restless to proceed onwards; and so bidding farewell to his disciple, Miss Muller; he and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier journeyed to Zermatt, one of the beauty spots of Switzerland, where he hoped to climb the Kornergrat and to secure the view of the Matterhorn. But of the party only Mr. Sevier succeeded in reaching the summit, the air being too rarefied for the other two. The next move was made to Schaffhausen, where the Falls of the Rhine are seen at their best.

From Schaffhausen the three tourists went to Heidelberg, the centre of one of the greatest German Universities, where two days were spent. A visit to the University and the castle above the city was made. Then on to Coblenz! Here a halt was made for the night, and on the next day the party boarded a steamer to journey up the Rhine as far as the city of Cologne, where the travellers expected to stay several days. The Swami marvelled at the great cathedral and attended a service there, and visited its sanctuary.

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Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had planned to take their guest from Cologne direct to Kiel, but he was anxious to see the great city of Berlin. His hosts, eager to please him, made a large detour, intending not only to visit Berlin, but Dresden as well. The Swami was struck with the general prosperity of the country and with the large number of its cities built after the modern style. Berlin with its wide streets, fine monuments and beautiful parks made him compare it favourably even with Paris itself.

When he was informed that their next destination was Dresden, he hesitated saying, "Professor Deussen will be expecting us. We must not defer our visit longer." Accordingly the party proceeded to Kiel. A very interesting account of this visit recorded by Mrs. Sevier who, together with her husband, was also invited to be the guests of the Deussen family, is given here in full:

"... My recollection of Kiel, a town in Germany, which is beautifully situated on the Baltic, is bright with agreeable memories of a pleasant day spent in the society of Dr. Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy in the University there,—a man of rare philosophical grasp, standing foremost in the rank of European Sanskrit scholars.

"On hearing that the Swami had arrived at the Hotel, the Professor immediately sent a note requesting his company at breakfast on the following day, courteously including my husband and myself in the invitation. Punctually at 10 o'clock the next morning we presented ourselves at his house, and were ushered into the Library, where we received a cordial reception from Dr. and Mrs. Deussen who were expecting us. After a few preliminary inquiries regarding the travels and plans of Swamiji, I noticed the Professor directing his eyes to some volumes lying open on the table, and with a scholar's appreciation of learning, he soon turned the conversation on books. . . . He considered the system of the Vedānta as founded on the Upanishads and Vedānta Sūtras, with San-karacharya's commentaries, some of the most majestic structures and valuable products of the genius of man in his search

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for Truth, and that the highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedānta. . . .

"It seems, the Professor added, that a movement is being made back towards the fountain-head of spirituality, a movement that will in the future, probably make India, the spiritual leader of the nations, the highest and greatest spiritual influence on earth.

"The Swami interested himself in some translations Dr. Deussen was making, and a discussion arose on the precise significance and correct understanding of various obscure passages. The former pointed out that clearness of definition was of primary, and elegance of diction of very secondary importance. The vigorous and lucid interpretations given by the Oriental exegetist with such firmness of conviction, and yet such delicacy of perception, eventually quite won over the German savant. . . ."

But to return to the narration of the day spent in Kiel. Some time during the day, the Professor found the Swami turning over the pages of a poetical work. He spoke to him but got no response. When the Swami came to know of it afterwards, he apologised, saying that he was so absorbed in reading that he had not heard him. The Professor was not satisfied with this explanation until, in the course of conversation the Swami quoted and interpreted verses from the book. Dr. Deussen was dumbfounded, and like the Maharaja of Khetri asked the Swami how he could accomplish such a feat of memory. Thereupon the conversation turned upon the subject of the concentration of the mind as practised by the Indian Yogi, and that with so much perfection that, the Swami said from personal knowledge, in that state he would be unconscious even if a piece of burning charcoal were placed on his body.

At this time, there was an Exhibition in Kiel, which Dr. Deussen insisted that the Swami must visit and offered to take him there. So immediately after tea, the Swami's party accompanied their host to the



## A TOUR OF THE CONTINENT

Exhibition and some time was spent in studying the various arts and industries of Germany. Partaking of light refreshments there the party returned to the hotel where the Swami was staying. The Professor suggested that the Swami should see the objects of interest in and about the city, and it was decided that on the next day they would all make an excursion to some of the outlying districts, notably to the famous harbour of Kiel, opened only a few days previously by the Kaiser.

About six weeks had been spent in holiday touring and the Swami felt that he could now take up his London work again with renewed vigour. Accordingly, he asked Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to make plans for returning immediately. Dr. Deussen had hoped that the Swami would prolong his visit so that he would have opportunities to discuss many philosophical matters with him in the quiet retreat of his own residence, where his treasure-room of learning and of books would have added much to the interest of their discussions. He tried to induce the Swami to remain if only for a few days, but when he was told that the Swami was anxious to put his work on a solid basis before returning to India which he intended to do in the near future the Professor understood and said, "Well, then, Swami, I shall meet you in Hamburg, and thence, *via* Holland, we shall both journey to London, where I hope to spend many happy hours with you."

At Hamburg Professor Deussen joined them. The party, with its additional member, went to Amsterdam, for three days, during which time they visited the art galleries, the museums, and other places of interest.

The channel crossing was a most unpleasant voyage, fortunately soon over. Professor Deussen

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made his home with friends in St. John's Wood, while the Swami accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to their home in Hampstead. The Swami was much improved in health and felt that he could meet the demands of his work with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Having initiated Swami Saradananda by personal example and instructions into the manner and matter of the preaching work that he would be called upon to take up, the Swami at the repeated requests of his disciples and students of Vedânta in America, had sent him to New York, at the end of June, in the company of Mr. J. J. Goodwin. The sweet and gentle personality of the new teacher and his masterly exposition of Hinduism, at once drew to him large numbers of men and women in America, "who were attracted to the Vedânta by the other Swami's eloquence and example, but who had not had sufficient opportunity for personal contact to become, what one would call, *established* in it." Soon after his arrival he was invited to be one of the teachers in the Greenacre Conference of Comparative Religions, where he began his work with a lecture on Vedânta, and classes on the Yoga Systems, under the large Pine tree known as the "Swami's Pine," which had served as a canopy and open pulpit for Swami Vivekananda two years ago. At the close of the Conference, Swami Saradananda was invited to lecture in Brooklyn, New York and Boston. During his tour on the Continent, the Swami was delighted with the news of his brother disciple's immediate success and constantly growing influence, and to hear, from private letters, that the student's expectations of their new teacher were fully satisfied.

After a few days' stay with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in Hampstead, the Swami commenced his

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work by giving two drawing-room lectures within the first two weeks at Airlie Lodge, Ridgeway Gardens, the residence of Miss Muller at Wimbledon. On the first occasion Mr. J. F. Schwam presided and the room was crowded, the majority of attendants being society ladies. The Swami spoke on "Vedânta as a Factor in Civilisation." The lecture was a great success and it was followed by the opening of systematic classes in which the Swami gave both private and general instruction, teaching many the principles of Râja Yoga and the practices of meditation..

His public lectures in England were mostly devoted to the exposition of the philosophical portions of the Vedânta, known as Jnâna Yoga. In order to grant the general public an opportunity of hearing the Swami, Mr. E. T. Sturdy had engaged a large room at 39, Victoria Street with ample accommodation. Close by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had taken a flat, at 14, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, for the Swami and his Gurubhai, Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India at the urgent call of the Swami to help him in his London work. The Swami did all in his power to impress the new-comer with the responsibilities of his new life. Day after day he trained him so that he would be able to carry on the work alone. He was thinking of sailing for India at the end of the year and was therefore eager to leave behind a worker, fitted both spiritually and intellectually to take his place.

At this time he was writing also to his Indian disciples giving them instructions on various subjects, keeping them informed of the progress of his London work, which was growing apace. He was hopeful and enthusiastic, stating that with twenty earnest-minded and capable preachers of Vedânta he could

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convert the West in as many years. He realised the vast importance of his work so far as its influence on the Indian public was concerned, for he wrote, "One blow struck outside of India is equal to a hundred thousand struck within."

Professor Deussen often visited the Swami, discussing with him the principles of the Vedânta and gaining from him a much clearer insight into the whole body of Vedânta thought. He was in thorough agreement with the Swami when the latter pointed out to him the difficulties that lay in the way of a thorough understanding of the Vedânta metaphysics by Western minds, the trouble resting in the fact that the Western philosopher was apt to regard Indian idealism through the lens of preconceived ideas. And as he came to know the Swami more intimately, he understood that one must become de-Occidentalised, as it were, in order to master the spirit of the Hindu philosophical systems, for these were not so much systems of logic as methods of spiritual vision. For two whole weeks, during his stay in London, the Professor was with the Swami, either by day or by night. At the same time Professor Max Müller of Oxford was in communication with the Swami.

From Switzerland the Swami had written to an Indian disciple, "There is a big London work waiting for me next month," and so it proved to be. The most notable feature of his work during the months of October and November, was his delivery of the message of the Vedânta both in its most practical and highest metaphysical aspects. He opened his lecture course with a masterly exposition of that most abstruse subject, the Hindu theory of Mâyâ, to define which has not only confounded the best Sanskrit scholars of the West but puzzled even the ancient philosophers of his own land. In fact, the burden of all his subse-

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quent lectures in London was the idea of Mâyâ. How successfully he has achieved this most difficult task will be apprehended by everyone who carefully studies his lectures on "Mâyâ and Illusion," "Mâyâ and the Evolution of the Conception of God," "Mâyâ and Freedom," "The Absolute and Manifestation." In his other lectures delivered during the period which followed, such as "God in Everything," "Realisation," "Unity in Diversity," "The Freedom of the Soul," as also in the last series of four lectures known as "The Practical Vedânta," one sees the Swami full of the one luminous thought of the Advaita, that there is but One Infinite Existence, the Sat-Chit-Anandam, the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute,—and That is the innermost nature of man, and, as such, the soul of man is, in essence, eternally free and divine, all manifestations being but the varying expressions of this nature of the Soul. No better exposition of a rationalistic religion,—upon which, the Swami believed, depended the salvation of Europe,—could be conceived than these unique presentments of the Highest Truth. Extraordinarily equipped as he was to garb the greatest metaphysical truths in a poetic language of wonderful depth and profundity, he made the dizzy heights of Advaita appear like a land rich with the verdure of noblest human aspiration and fragrant with the flowers of finest emotions. The tremendous power of his personality behind his utterances, made every word fall like a thunderbolt upon his audience. In one of his lectures on Mâyâ he rose to such heights of feeling that his whole audience were transported out of themselves, so much so that they lost all sense of personality, as it were, being merged in the consciousness of the Highest for the time being. In such moments as these, his hearers admitted, a teacher can transmit his realisation even by a spoken word and

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make his pupils touch the borderlands of the Infinite. All these lectures were delivered on the spur of the moment, without the least preparation.

During the months of October and November the Swami also received numerous invitations to lecture in private drawing-rooms, in fashionable clubs and to select audiences in London and Oxford. He made a friend of Canon Wilberforce who received him at his residence in Westminster with great cordiality and marked attention, and became a keen student of the Vedânta philosophy. Several times he spoke before the Sesame Club, and some of the members became his ardent followers. Among many other celebrities with whom he came in contact were Mr. Frederick H. Myers, the well-known author of several psychological works, the Rev. John Page, Hopps, the Nonconformist minister, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, the Positivist and peace advocate, Dr. Stanton Coit, the Rev. Charles Voysey, the Theistic leader, Mr. Edward Carpenter, the author of "Towards Democracy," and many other persons of culture and enlightenment. Not only many Nonconformist clergymen, but even high clericals of the Anglican Church, were deeply impressed with the principles of the Vedânta; and on several occasions the Swami himself went to churches where he listened to sermons, the ideas of which were characteristic of that advanced religious thought which he had propagated.

At this time the Swami was occupied with "writing something big on the Vedânta philosophy," as he said in a letter, and was "busy collecting passages from the various Vedas bearing on the Vedânta in its threefold aspect." Besides numerous private interviews, many classes a week, and constant writing and public lecturing, he was planning for his work in India and giving instructions accordingly to his Indian

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disciples and Gurubhâis. He was unable to fulfil his long-cherished desire of leaving a systematised statement of his philosophy in book form before departing for India. It, however, was a matter for satisfaction to him to see that there was a great demand for his published lectures and class lessons especially for his "Râja Yoga," the first edition of which had been sold out by October, and that there were already standing orders for several hundreds when the second edition went to press in November. But the idea of writing books on Hindu philosophy never left him, and even as late as January 1901, when he came to Mâyâvati, he said to his disciples that he was seriously thinking of retiring from public life to devote the rest of his days to writing books in a secluded spot,—and no other place he could think of, he said, was more suitable for this than Mayavati.

All this work was beginning to tax him; he was growing more and more world-weary. The old Paramahansa spirit which feels the bondage of any work,—even that of doing good to others,—as unbearable, possessed him at times and he longed to throw it off and to be merged in the Infinite Peace. Even as early as August 23, he had written from Lucerne in Switzerland:

"I have begun the work, let others' work it out. So you see, to set the work going I had to defile myself by touching money and property, for a time. Now I am sure my part of the work is done and I have no more interest in Vedânta or any philosophy in the world, or in the work itself. I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, this world.

"Even its religious utility is beginning to pall on me. . . . These works and doing good and so forth, are just a little exercise to cleanse the mind. I have had enough of it. . . ."

But though the Swami felt and wrote in this fashion, the Will of the Lord was otherwise. He

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was yet to do a world of work in his own land in the re-statement and re-valuation of the Sanâtana Dharma. The Swami had been writing from England, even as he did formerly from America, to the effect that his disciples must learn to stand on their own feet, and must be filled with his own enthusiasm and spread the new light all over India. And again from Switzerland he wrote, "Do not be afraid. Great things are going to be done, my children. Take heart. . . . In the winter I am going back to India and will try to set things on their feet there. Work on, brave hearts, fail not,—no saying nay; work on,—the Lord is behind the work. Mahâsakti is with you. . . ." And in India the work was being pushed on by his disciples. The *Brahmavâdin* was disseminating the Swami's ideas broadcast, and instilling into the hearts of the people the great ideals of Hinduism.

One of the events which satisfied the Swami immensely, was the success of the maiden speech of Swami Abhedananda, whom he had designated to speak in his stead at a club in Bloomsbury Square, on October 27. The new monk gave an excellent address on the general character of the Vedânta teaching; and it was noticed that he possessed spiritual fervour and possibilities of making a good speaker. A description of this occasion, written by Mr. Eric Hammond, reads:

"Some disappointment awaited those that had gathered that afternoon. It was announced that Swamiji did not intend to speak, and Swami Abhedananda would address them instead.

"An overwhelming joy was noticeable in the Swami in his scholar's success. Joy compelled him to put at least some of itself into words that rang with delight unalloyed. It was the joy of a spiritual father over the achievement of a well-beloved son, a successful and brilliant student. The Master was more than content to have effaced himself in order that his Brother's



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opportunity should be altogether unhindered. The whole impression had in it a glowing beauty quite indescribable. It was as though the Master thought and knew his thought to be true: 'Even if I perish on this plane, my message will be sounded through these dear lips and the world will hear it. . . .' He remarked that this was the first appearance of his dear Brother and pupil, as an English-speaking lecturer before an English audience, and he pulsated with pure pleasure at the applause that followed the remark. His selflessness throughout the episode burnt itself into one's deepest memory."

At this time the Swami was also delighted to hear frequently of Swami Saradananda's success in America chiefly through the newspaper cuttings sent to him. Following upon his teaching at the Greenacre Conference, Swami Saradananda had gone to deliver lectures at Boston, Brooklyn and New York, and everywhere had made many friends and won the love and esteem of earnest followers. He then settled down in New York to carry on the Vedânta movement in a regular and well-organised way. There was no doubt that he was making an impression among some of the best people in New York and its environs, as the reports of his work at this time testify.

Moreover, Miss Waldo whom the Swami regarded as his ablest and best-prepared student, had at his express desire organised classes of her own and was conducting them with great credit. Among her other labours, during the absence of the Swami Saradananda in Cambridge for November and December, she conducted the classes in the Vedânta Society in New York.

That the interest in the Vedânta philosophy went on steadily increasing in America since the Swami left for England, and that he was remembered with endearing love and gratitude by his students, will be evidenced by the following letter written to the editor

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of the *Brahmavâdin* by Helen F. Huntington on October 14, 1896, from Gainesville, Georgia :

"I am sure you will be glad to know that the peaceable fruits of Swami Vivekananda's teachings have been all the while increasing ; his influence is like sunshine—so quiet, so potent and far-reaching. It will always be a marvel to us that an Oriental could take such a firm hold on us Occidentals, trained as we have been by long habits of thought and education to opposing views. . . . Our interest is not of the noisy effervescent quality often incited by passing fads;—today it is stronger and deeper than ever before, and all of the Swami's followers endeavour earnestly to spread the truth according to the various opportunities afforded to them,—some quietly within domestic circles, others more prominently, as the case may be. And who is able to estimate the measure of man's silent influence? . . .

"Even down here, a thousand miles or more from the scene of the Swami's work, I hear mention of his name. . . . I hope the time is not far distant when the Vedânta will be as well known here as in New York City. . . .

"It is impossible not to wish for Swami Vivekananda's return to our midst, as he has endeared himself so deeply to all of us. As he said of his Guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, 'His presence was a blessing to everyone, saint and sinner,' so was his own life among us ; for he influenced us to better living and brotherly kindness to all men. . . ."

The Swami had great confidence that the work in America would not suffer by his absence in England. His friends and disciples corresponded with him regularly and he saw from the tone in which they addressed him that they were heart and soul in their enthusiasm for the movement.

During the month of October, 1896, the Swami's mind turned more and more towards India. He had been thinking for some time of returning thither and had spoken accordingly to some of his more intimate friends, particularly to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. But there was nothing definite, his remarks being only of a passing character. He had written also in a tentative way to Mrs. Bull concerning his intention. In reply

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he received a letter, asking if he would be willing to accept a large sum of money with which to further his work in India, especially with regard to the founding of a permanent home, as the headquarters of the brotherhood in Calcutta. The Swami replied a week before his sailing for India, to the effect that he was profoundly grateful for the generous offer, but that he did not feel at the time that he should encumber himself with such responsibilities, as he wished to commence his work on a small scale in India, and that until he had found his bearings he could not accept her kindness. He promised, however, to write details from India.

It was after one of the class lectures towards the middle of November that the Swami called Mrs. Sevier aside and asked her quite suddenly to purchase four tickets immediately for the most convenient steamer from Naples, as he desired to shorten the sea-voyage by travelling to Naples *via* the Continent. It was a surprise to her, even though she knew that the Swami intended sailing. Both she and her husband, who were to accompany him to help in his work in India and lead the Vânaprastha life, accelerated their preparations. It was decided that they would visit some of the important cities in Italy *en route*. That same day they secured berths on a new steamer of the North German Lloyd, which was to leave Naples for Ceylon on December 16. Subsequently however, they were transferred to the steamer "Printz Regent Luitpold," as the new steamer was not ready to sail on that day.

The Swami at once wrote to his Madras followers informing them of his coming, stating casually that he wanted to establish two centres, one in Calcutta, the other in Madras, and that Mr. and Mrs. Sevier intended founding a Himalayan Centre. He added,

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“We will begin work with these three centres; and later on, we will get to Bombay and Allahabad. And from these points, if the Lord be pleased, we will invade not only India, but send bands of preachers to every country in the world.” His mind was full of plans, and he discussed them enthusiastically with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. He seemed to be consumed with the desire to deliver his message to his motherland, and they in their turn anticipated great results, and made up their minds to renounce the world and dedicate themselves to the furtherance of his mission and to the practical realisation of those of his teachings which they had made their own. So they made quick preparations to settle their domestic affairs, and in a short time had disposed of their belongings consisting, among other things, of ornaments, pictures, books and furniture. Like true disciples they handed over to their Guru the whole of the proceeds of the sale. They took rooms elsewhere so as to be ready to start whensoever he wished. His devoted disciple, Mr. Goodwin, who had taken the vow of a Brahmachârin and served the Swami as his secretary and personal attendant, was also to accompany him. Miss Muller with her lady-companion, Miss Bell, was preparing to follow him at a later date. In his plans of work in India the Swami, as a true patriot, did not forget to plan to help the women of his own land. Simultaneously with his idea of founding the three monastic centres for the training of young men as preachers, he had thought of starting an institution for the education of girls on national lines, producing not only ideal wives and mothers, but Brahmachârinis working for the improvement of their own sex. The Swami had inspired Miss Muller with the idea of being of service to the women of India, and she had gladly promised to support the proposed educational institu-

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tion for Hindu girls. He had also in mind to bring Miss Margaret Noble to India in due time in order to put her in charge of his intended work for women. Thus from all points of view the prospects of launching a successful campaign in India seemed bright with a glorious promise, and the Swami was transported with joy at seeing that the dearest dream of his life—the rejuvenation of his motherland was going to be fulfilled at last.

When his English students came to know that the Swami was to leave in the middle of December, they were filled with sadness. It was decided to hold a farewell reception in his honour. The chief organiser of this final meeting was that indefatigable worker, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, than whom the Swami had few better friends. It was he and Mr. Goodwin who drew up the farewell address and sent invitations to all of the Swami's friends and followers.

On December 13, the final Sunday before the Swami's departure from London, the gathering at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, in Piccadilly, where the meeting was held, was enormous. Scores of people from all parts of the city, and some even from the distant suburbs poured into the hall, until there was hardly standing-room. Swami Abhedananda was there. He had now made a place for himself in the huge metropolis, and it was to him that the gathering unconsciously turned for solace on this day of loss. The Swami's heart was full when he entered the hall amidst a stillness which spoke eloquently of the bond between him and his London followers. Mr. Eric Hammond eloquently describes this farewell gathering in the following words:

“It was Sunday in London, when shops were shut, business at a standstill, and the city streets silenced for a while from

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some at least of the rattle and the rumble of their heavier traffic. Londoners wore their Sunday clothing, their Sunday bearing and manner, and grey, subdued, and semi-silent folk wended their way to church and chapel. This afternoon the friends of Swamiji were to say 'Good-bye' to him whose coming had meant so much to them. In the hall of meeting, dedicated to the use of the artists, paintings hung upon the walls; palms, flowers and ferns decorated the platform from which Swamiji would utter his final speech in England's great metropolis to the British people. All sorts and conditions of men were there, but all alike were filled by one desire: to see him, to hear him, even if may be, to touch his garment once again.

"On the platform musicians and singers at stated intervals 'discoursed sweet' sounds.' Speeches illustrating the esteem and affection which Swamiji had won, were made by men and by women. Salvoes of applause punctuated and followed them. Many were silent, tongue-tied and sad at heart. Tears were very near to some eyes. Grey and gloom without were intensified and deepened by grey and gloom within. One form, one figure, fought and triumphed over sorrow; arrayed in garments, glistening as of amber, Swamiji passed among the people, like a living shaft of sunshine.

" 'Yes, Yes,' he said, 'we shall meet again; we *shall*.' "

The Chairman of the meeting, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, presented an address to the Swami. The Swami was much moved and replied in terms of great endearment and glowing spiritual fervour. He pointed out the fact that history repeats itself and that Christianity had been rendered possible only by the Roman peace. "He perhaps meant" comments Sister Nivedita, "that there would yet be seen a great army of Indian preachers in the West, reaping the harvest he had sown so well, and making ready in their turn new harvests, for the distant reaping of the future." And above all his public utterances at the time of his departure, rings out that triumphant statement which he made to Mr. Hammond, "I may even find it good to get out of this body, to throw it off like a disused garment. But I shall never cease preaching and helping man-

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kind until all shall come to know the Highest Truth." It is remarkable how, here and there, ever since his death, persons who had never seen him in his lifetime, are now feeling his spiritualising influence by communing with him through the great utterances he has left behind. True, he visited London again, but not in the capacity of a public teacher, as at that time other fields were calling him, in the United States of America. And there was yet work to be done in India.

The Swami's last lecture in London on the "Advaita Vedānta" was the fitting culmination of the whole series, as it speaks the final word on the highest stage of Realisation. Reporting this lecture, but particularly making a survey of the influence created by the Swami, a distinguished correspondent to the "Indian Mirror" writes as follows on December 14, from London :

"The last lecture on the Advaita philosophy was given by the Swami Vivekananda to a crowded audience, which was anxious not to lose this last opportunity of hearing him for some time to come, on December 10, 1896. The regularity with which these thoughtful people have attended the Swami's lectures in London, is an indication of the serious attention which they have given to the whole of the present Vedānta exposition—an exposition which, in the hands of a personality, which many have learned to very deeply respect, and others to love, finds an application to every phase of Western life, as well as to that of Eastern life, where its first presentment was made. It is this liberal and wise interpretation, which has brought people of many varying shades of opinion, including several of the clergy of the Church of England, to group themselves together in an effort to make the Swami's teachings as widely known as possible. . . .

"A deep spiritual teaching is not likely to move rapidly at first, but steadily the Eastern thought is being more and more understood through an army of conscientious and industrious translators, and a teacher like the Swami Vivekananda comes and gives a living force to this lore, wrapped up in

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books, and also adjusts discrepancies. Yet, notwithstanding all that has been done by various scholars, the majority, probably, of those people who certainly may be called refined and educated, who have attended the Swami's lectures, have now had their attention called for the first time to the great treasures of Universal Thought and Wisdom, which India holds through the ages in trust, as it were, for the world. . . . If the Swami Vivekananda's work may be called a missionary effort, it may be contrasted with most of the other missionary efforts of the day by its not having produced any bitterness, by its not having given rise to a single instance of ill-feeling or sectarianism. The reason of this is simple, and great is its strength. The Swami is not a sectarian; he is the promoter of Religion, not of one religion only. The exponents of single points in the vast field of religion can find nothing in him to fight.

“ . . . Amongst those who attended the farewell reception were several old officers and civilians who have spent years of their life in India, and who cannot be presumed to be carried away by an enthusiasm for a particular exponent, a philosophy, or a people of whom they know nothing.”

Many people after hearing the Swami in London declared that the manner and matter of his exposition of the Vedânta philosophy revealed to them an entirely new and encouraging view of life and that eternal substratum beneath it. Thus writes Miss M. E. Noble who afterwards became known as Sister Nivedita :

“To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us have been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality, in our faith. To these, the Vedânta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. ‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light’ . . . .

“ . . . It was the Swami's ‘*I am God*’ that came as something always known, only never said before. . . . Yet again, it



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was the Unity of Man, that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage and we know it. . . ."

Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, a celebrated Indian publicist, speaking of the impression which Swami Vivekananda left in England, wrote from London to *The Indian Mirror* of February 15, 1898:

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from 'The Dead Pulpit' by Mr. Haweis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

"Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way. . . . She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you?' . . . . She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you were coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, 'Look, there is the Swami Vivekananda.' As I had to catch the train in a hurry I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and was compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda, even before she knew him personally. I felt

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highly gratified at this agreeable incident, and thanked my *Gerua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides this incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen who have come to revere India and who listen eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India."

During his stay in England, both before and after his visit to the Continent, the Swami himself was pleased with the results of his English labours. To one of his closest American friends he wrote (almost in a mood of prophecy concerning the future character and success of his mission) that he believed in the power of the English to assimilate great ideas; that though the process of assimilation might be slow, it would be all the more sure and abiding. He often spoke of the hold the Vedânta would eventually have in England and believed that the time would come when distinguished ecclesiastics of the Church of England, imbued with the truth and the idealism of the Vedânta, would form a liberal community within the Anglican Church itself, supporting the universality of religion, both in vision and in practice.

Referring to his work in England, in his famous "Reply to the Address of Welcome in Calcutta," the Swami says:

"My work in England has been more satisfactory to me than my work in America. The bold, brave and steady Englishman, . . . if he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out, and the immense practicality and energy of the race makes it sprout up and immediately bear fruit. It is not so in any other country. That immense practicality, that immense vitality of the race you do not see anywhere else. There is less of imagination, but more of work, and who knows the well-spring, the mainspring of the English heart? How much imagination and feeling is there! They are a nation of heroes; they are the true Kshatriyas; their education is to hide their feelings and never to show them. From their childhood they have been educated up to that. . . . But with all this heroic superstructure, behind this covering of the fighter, there is a deep spring of feeling in the English heart. If you once

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know how to reach it, if you get there, if you have personal contact and mix with him, he will open his heart, he is your friend for ever, he is your servant. Therefore in my opinion, my work in England has been more satisfactory than anywhere else. . . ."

Before his departure for India, he wrote to a group of women disciples in America:

"The work in London has been a roaring success. The English are not so bright as the Americans, but once you touch their heart, it is yours for ever. Slowly have I won success, and is it not remarkable that by six months' work altogether I should have a steady class of about one hundred and twenty persons apart from public lectures? Here everyone means work—the practical Englishman. Captain and Mrs. Sevier and Mr. Goodwin are going to India with me to work and spend their own money on it! There are scores here ready to do the same: men and women of position, ready to give up everything for the idea once they feel convinced! And last, though not least, the help in the shape of money to start my 'work' in India has come and more will follow. My ideas about the English have been revolutionised. I now understand why the Lord has blessed them above all other races. They are steady, sincere to the backbone, with great depths of feeling,—only with a crust of stoicism on the surface,—if that is broken you have your man."

Certainly there never acted a greater force to produce a sympathetic relation and co-operation between the Eastern and Western worlds than that wielded by the Swami and his Gurubhais and his disciples.

On December 16, the Swami and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier left London for the Continent, Mr. Goodwin sailing from Southampton to meet them at Naples. Several intimate friends were at the London station to see them off. Mr. E. T. Sturdy voiced the feelings of many of his fellow-disciples when he penned the following lines in a private letter to one of them in America:

"Swami Vivekananda left today . . . . He had a magnificent reception in the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in

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Water-Colours. There were about five hundred people there, and a good many friends were away from London. His influence has sunk very deep into many hearts. We are going straight ahead with his work. His brother-Swami, a nice, attractive, ascetic-minded young man will help me in this. . . .

"Your presumption is correct. I am heavy-hearted today at the loss of the noblest friend and the purest teacher I have met in this incarnation. I must have stored some exceptional merit in the past to receive such a blessing now. What I longed for all my life I have found in the Swami."

Before closing the narrative of the Swami's life in England, an incident which shows his courage in the face of danger, must be mentioned. Once as he was walking with Miss Muller and an English friend across some fields, a mad bull came tearing towards them. In the words of Sister Nivedita :

"The Englishman frankly ran, and reached the other side of the hill in safety. The woman ran as far as she could, and then sank to the ground, incapable of further effort. Seeing this, and unable to aid her, the Swami,—thinking 'So *this* is the end, after all'—took up his stand in front of her, with folded arms. He told afterwards how his mind was occupied with a mathematical calculation, as to how far the bull would be able to throw. But the animal suddenly stopped, a few paces off, and then, raising his head, retreated sullenly.

"A like courage—though he himself was far from thinking of these incidents—had shown itself, in his early youth, when he quietly stepped up to a runaway horse, and caught it, in the streets of Calcutta, thus saving the life of the woman, who occupied the carriage behind."

## XXVII

### TOWARDS INDIA

Now London was left behind. It was as if a great burden had suddenly dropped from the Swami's shoulders. He knew that the work would go on well under Swami Abhedananda. He had faith in the Lord and he knew that he was but an instrument in the hands of the Most High.

The Swami rejoiced that he was free again. He said to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, "Now I have but one thought, and that is India. I am looking forward to India—to India!" On the eve of his departure an English friend asked, "Swami, how do you like your motherland now after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West?" His significant reply was, "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha!"

The party travelled directly to Milan, *via* Dover, Calais and Mont Cenis. The Swami who was in his happiest mood, made the long hours pass rapidly, and the journey, a delight. His mind was full of plans for his country, and of thoughts of the crowded hours of public life he would probably have on reaching there. Railroad travelling generally fatigued him, but on this occasion he seemed to enjoy it. He was like a boy, pleased with everything, and keenly observant of everything on the way. His companions entered heartily into his enthusiastic moods and plans of work, for they too were eagerly anticipating their Indian experience. They entertained high hopes of

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what they should do in India in helping the Swami to establish the proposed Himalayan Ashrama.

Through France, across the Alps, the train travelled on and at last they reached Milan. The Swami and his companions took up their quarters at a hotel close to the cathedral in order to visit frequently this celebrated edifice. The Swami was much impressed with Leonardo da Vinci's, "The Last Supper." Altogether the Swami enjoyed Milan; this was his first experience in Italy. Leaving Milan, the party next visited the city of Pisa, famous for its Leaning Tower, its cathedral, the Campo Santo and its baptistry. Both in Milan and in Pisa the Swami admired the rich marble work, which in Pisa, in particular, is both of black and white. From Pisa they came to Florence. Its situation on the Arno, surrounded by picturesque hills makes of Florence a beautiful city, apart from the many objects and places of historic interest. The art galleries were visited, drives were taken in the parks, the history of Savonarola was narrated, and the three travellers entered into the spirit of this city.

In Florence the Swami had a pleasant experience. As he was driving in the Park he met Mr. and Mrs. Hale of Chicago, whom the reader will recall as the Swami's intimate friends and hosts in America, whose residence he had made his home for some time. They were touring in Italy and knew nothing of his presence in the city. Thus it was for the three a most agreeable surprise. The Swami spent some hours in lively reminiscences and discussed with them the plans of his life and work in India.

As the train left Florence for Rome the Swami was full of emotion, for of all cities in Europe he was most desirous to see Rome. One week was spent in this imperial city. Each day new places of interest

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were visited. Prior to leaving London, Mrs. Sevier, through the kindness of Miss MacLeod, was given the address of a Miss Edwards, well known in English circles in Rome. With her was staying Miss Alberta Sturgis, a niece of Miss MacLeod. Both these ladies became warm admirers of the Swami and his teaching, and joined him and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in several of their excursions in and about Rome. Miss Edwards was especially taken with the idealism of his philosophy and with his immense knowledge of Roman history and general human culture.

Everything that he saw in Rome immensely interested him. At St. Peter's beneath its vast dome, before the shrines of the Apostles, he entered, in the silence of meditation, into that apostolic world in which the Apostle Paul preached and St. Peter inspired the followers of the Christ. He was impressed with the Christian liturgy, seeing therein a kinship with the religious ceremonials of his own land. One of his lady companions asked, "Well, Swami, do you like these ceremonies?" He said, "If you love a Personal God, then give Him all your best,—incense, flower, fruits and silk. There is nothing good enough to be offered to God." But on Christmas Day when he attended the imposing ceremony of High Mass at St. Peter's with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier he became restless after a time and whispered to them, "Why all this pageantry and ostentatious show? Can it be possible that the Church that practises such display, pomp and gorgeous ceremonial is really the follower of the lowly Jesus who had not where 'to lay his head?'" He could not help drawing a contrast between these splendours of the outward religious form at St. Peter's and the great spirit of Sannyâs which the Christ taught!

In order to divert the Swami's mind Mr. and

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Mrs. Sevier arranged for many pleasant drives on those beautiful old Roman highways away from even history and ruins. The climate and the spirit of the Eternal City are at their best in the winter season, especially at Christmas time. The Christ-spirit filled the air, and the Swami was caught up into it; many times he spoke touchingly of the Christ-Child, contrasting the stories of His birth with that of the beautiful Indian Christ-Child, Sri Krishna.

The Swami made the round of all the places of interest in Rome, the palaces of the Cæsars, the Forum, the Palatine Hill, the Temple Vesta, the public baths of the ancient Romans, the colosseum, the Capitoline Hill, and the Church of S. Maria di Ara Coeli, St. Peter's, and the Vatican, amongst other places of interest, of beauty and historic importance. At the Forum, once adorned with most imposing buildings and which is now covered with numerous relics of its former majesty. . . . Swamiji closely examined Trajan's Pillar, the most beautiful column in Rome. It is 117 ft. in height and the bas-reliefs with which it is ornamented, represent the exploits of Trajan, and contain over 2,000 human figures. The triumphal Arch of Titus, which was erected, 81 A.D., to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem, is in a good state of preservation. Swamiji was very quiet at first, but the more one watched him, the more convinced one became of the interest that lay behind the outward calm. He was thinking of the Rome of long ago that had mighty aspirations and embodied them in architectural forms marvellous for their size and beauty. As he went from place to place, he began to voice his observations, mingling with them such a wealth of knowledge of history and architecture that a glamour was thrown around the ancient monuments. He traced the fortunes of the Imperial idea under the



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Roman Empire in the heyday of its power, when the world seemed to lie at its feet, conquered; its rise and fall after the death of Augustus, when the people and their rulers were alike corrupt.

Being Christmas Eve the streets outside the church of S. Maria di Ara Coeli had the appearance of a fair, with their lines of stalls, filled with sweets and toys, fruits and cakes, and cheap pictures of the Bambino. The Swami was amused and said, it reminded him of a *melâ* (a religious fair) in India.

When the party left Rome, however, the Swami was not sad, for he realised that each day was bringing him nearer to the desired event,—the departure for India. The next move was to Naples, where they were to embark. There were several days before the date of sailing giving the party an opportunity to see Naples and its famous environments. A day was spent in seeing Vesuvius, the party ascending to the crater by the funicular railway. While they were there, a mass of stones were thrown up into the air from the crater. Another day was devoted to visiting Pompeii, and the Swami was charmed with all he saw there. He was especially interested in a recently excavated house containing frescoes, fountains and statues, exactly as they were found. The Museum and the Aquarium also attracted the attention of the party. But what most concerned them was the approach of the date for sailing. The ship arrived at last from Southampton, bringing Mr. Goodwin as one of its passengers.

The steamer left Naples on December 30, 1896, and was to reach Colombo on January 15, 1897. They were to be many days on the ocean, but the voyage was not tedious. The Swami was throughout in excellent spirits and greatly benefited by the rest. In the Mediterranean, about midway between

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Naples and Port Said, the Swami had a phenomenal dream which made a profound impression upon his mind. One night, shortly after he had retired, he had a dream in which a bearded old man, venerable and Rishi-like in appearance, appeared before him and said, "Observe well this place that I show to you. You are now in the island of Crete. This is the land in which Christianity began." The Swami then heard him say, "I am one of the Therapeutæ who used to live here." And he added still another word which escaped the Swami's memory, but which might be "Essene," the name of a sect of which Jesus the Christ is said to have been a member. They were monastic in tendency, with a liberal religious outlook and a philosophy embracing the highest unity. The word "*Therapeutæ*" unmistakably means "*Sons or disciples of the Theras*," from Thera, an elder among the Buddhist monks, and Putra, in Sanskrit, means a son. The old man concluded, "The truths and ideals preached by us have been given out by the Christians as having been taught by Jesus; but for the matter of that, there was no such personality of the name of Jesus ever born. Various evidences testifying to this fact will be brought to light by excavating here." The Swami woke and at once rushed to the deck to ascertain their whereabouts just then. He met a ship's officer, turning in from his watch. "What is the time," he asked him. "Midnight," he was told. "And where are we?" "Just fifty miles off Crete!"

The Swami was startled at this singular coincidence, and it set him thinking about the historicity of Jesus the Christ, about which he had never entertained any doubts. Now he saw that the Acts of the Apostles might be an older record than the Gospels themselves, and that the views of the Therapeutæ and

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the sect of Nazarene might have commingled, thus conferring upon Christianity both a philosophy and a personality. But these speculations could not be offered as conclusive evidence in support of this idea of the origin and history of Christianity. He, however, had no doubt that in Alexandria a meeting had taken place of the Indian and Egyptian elements which contributed considerably towards the moulding of Christianity. It is said that the Swami wrote to a friend in England who was an archæologist about his dream, and asked him to find out if there was any truth in it. It was some time after the Swami's death that an item appeared in *The Statesman* of Calcutta stating that some Englishmen in the course of excavations in Crete came across records containing wonderful revelations of the origin of Christianity.

Whatever doubts the Swami may have had on the matter, the dream did not make him yield a whit in his love and adoration of the Son of Mary. There was the instance when a Western disciple requested him to give his blessing to a picture of the Sistine Madonna; he touched the feet of the Divine Child instead. There was also the instance when he turned upon another and exclaimed with fire in his eyes, "Madam, had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth I would have washed His feet, not with my tears but with my heart's blood!"

The Swami had an unpleasant experience with two of his fellow-passengers on his way to India. They were Christian Missionaries who insisted on talking with him on the contrast between Hinduism and Christianity. Their methods of argument were most offensive; when they were beaten at every point they lost their temper, became rude and virulent, and abused the Hindus and their religion. The Swami stood it as long as he could; walking close to one of

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the speakers he suddenly seized him quietly but firmly by 'the collar and said, half-humorously and half-grimly, "If you abuse my religion again I'll throw you overboard!" The frightened Missionary "shook in his boots" and said under his breath, "Let me go, sir, I'll never do it again!" From that time on he was most obsequious to the Swami on all occasions and endeavoured to remedy his misbehaviour by exceeding kindness.

Apropos of this incident, the Swami exclaimed in the course of a conversation with a disciple in Calcutta, "My dear Sinha, if anybody insulted your mother what will you do?" "I would fall upon him, sir, and teach him a good lesson!" "Well said, but, now if you had the same positive feeling for your own religion the true Mother of our country, you could never bear to see any Hindu brother converted into a Christian. Nevertheless, you see this occurring every day, yet you are quite indifferent! Where is your faith! Where is your patriotism! Everyday Christian Missionaries abuse Hinduism to your faces, and yet how many are there amongst you who will stand up in its defence, whose blood boils with righteous indignation at the fact?"

As a contrast to this, was one that occurred at Aden. While visiting the places of interest at this port, he drove to the Tanks, three miles inland. Espying a man at a distance busily engaged in smoking his Hookah, he left his English disciples and walked rapidly towards him. He was highly delighted at seeing an Indian face again. Accosting him as "brother," he entered into conversation with him. The man happened to be a Hindusthani betel-leaf seller. Swami's friends were greatly amused when they heard the Swami say boyishly to the stranger, "Brother, do give me your pipe," and

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to see him puffing away at it with great glee. Mr. Sevier then made merry with him by saying, "Now we see! It was this then that made you run away from us so abruptly!" The Swami had not had a Hookah smoke for years. When the man learned *who* his guest was, he fell at the Swami's feet. Speaking of this incident, the Swami's companions say, "The shopkeeper could not have resisted him, for he had such an endearing way about him when asking for anything that he was simply irresistible. We shall never forget that ingenuous look on his face when he said with childlike sweetness, 'Brother, do give me your pipe.'"

In the early morning of January 15, the coast of Ceylon could be seen in the distance. It was a beautiful sight in the roseate hues of the rising sun. Gradually, the harbour of Colombo with its majestic Cocoa Palms and its yellow-sanded beach came to view. This was India, and the Swami was beside himself with excitement. But he was totally unaware that he was going to meet representatives of all religious sects and social bodies who had come to welcome him home. One of his Gurubhâis had come to Ceylon to meet him; others were on the way, and in Madras and in Calcutta there was great excitement over his coming arrival. He was to find that he had become the "man of the hour" in India,—that this ovation was to be the first event in a grand march of triumph and national recognition from Colombo in the far south to Almora in the distant north.

## XXVIII

### TRIUMPHAL MARCH THROUGH CEYLON AND SOUTHERN INDIA

The home-coming of Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as a great event in the history of modern India, for a united India rose to do him honour. Looming as he did upon the national horizon as the Arch-Apostle of the Hinduism of his age, and regarded as the Prophet of a re-interpreted Hinduism, an "Aggressive Hinduism," new in statement, and new in courageous consciousness,—Swami Vivekananda was the Man of the Hour and the Harbinger of a new era. It is no wonder, therefore, that his coming was awaited eagerly by millions of his fellow-countrymen. For more than three years the Indian public had been made aware that the Swami was doing the great work of presenting and interpreting Hinduism to the Western nations, with signal success. All India looked to him as to some mighty Achârya of old, born again to revivify the fading glories of the Religion Eternal, and to carry her banner throughout the whole civilised world. New forces had been at play in India ever since his triumph at the Parliament of Religions. Through the study of the Swami's lectures and utterances, the eyes of the educated Indians were opened to the hidden beauties and treasures of their religion, and they came more and more to see how Vedântism alone could claim the supreme position of being a Universal Religion. They had learnt that the Swami possessed tremendous powers and spiritual realisations, and that as a true patriot he had made

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an absorbing study of India's complex problems. They were more than eager to see him and hear his message; the Nation had already accepted him as its Guru.

When the news arrived that Swami Vivekananda had left Europe for India, committees were formed in the larger cities for his reception. Two of his own Gurubhais hastened to Ceylon and Madras to greet him on his arrival. Others, personal disciples of the Swami himself, made their way from Bengal and the Northern provinces to the city of Madras, and awaited his arrival there. Immediately, the journals throughout the country commenced a series of brilliant editorials, eulogistic of his personality and work. This still further inflamed the national expectancy.

The Swami himself was in entire ignorance of these great preparations in his honour. Quietly and serenely in meditation; or in converse upon the history of nations, or in rest, he spent the time aboard the steamer *Printz Regent Luitpold*,—his mind occupied with a hundred plans for the re-animation and re-organisation of the Indian Dharma. He was constantly drawing comparisons and reflecting on his experiences in Western lands. While in the West, his mind had always been occupied with the study of the history of the whole world and the relation of the world to Hindusthan, and of the problems and destiny of India herself. More and more the hope of awakening a National Consciousness stirred in him, and he was writing in his letters to his Gurubhais and Indian disciples the method and the means of bringing it about, trying to inspire them with his own fire and enthusiasm. Many months back in the city of Detroit, whilst he was talking with some disciples concerning the overwhelming difficulties he had met with

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in presenting Hinduism to a Christian public, and telling them how he had spent the best part of his vital forces in creating, among the Western nations, a reverence for what India had given as an intellectual and spiritual inheritance to the world, suddenly his whole body shook with emotion, and he cried out: "India must listen to me! I shall shake India to her foundations! I shall send an electric thrill through her national veins! Wait! You shall see how India will receive me. It is India, my own India, that knows truly how to appreciate that which I have given so freely here, and with my life's blood, as the spirit of Vedânta. India will receive me in triumph." He spoke with a prophetic fervour, and those who heard him realised that it was not for recognition of himself that he was praying, but for that of the gospel which, he felt, must become for all future times the gospel to all the nations of the world,—India's gospel, the gospel of the Vedas and Vedânta!

Let the records of eye-witnesses in the various Indian journals tell the rest of the story of his reception:

"The fifteenth of January will be a memorable day in the annals of the Hindu Community of Colombo, being the day on which the Swami Vivekananda, a teacher of wonderful abilities and attainments, a member of the most sacred Hindu spiritual Order, the Sannyâsins of India, was welcomed by them. His visit is an epoch-making one, heralding the dawn of an unprecedented spiritual activity.

"As the day was closing and the night approached, when the auspicious and sacred hour of "Sandhyâ" noted by the Hindu Sâstras as the best suited for devotion came round as the harbinger of the coming great events of the day, the sage of noble figure, of sedate countenance with large, luminous eyes, arrived, dressed in the orange garb of a Sannyâsin, accompanied by the Swami Niranjanananda and others. . . . No words can describe the feelings of the vast masses and their expressions of love, when they saw the steam launch bearing the sage, steaming towards the jetty. . . . The din and clamour of shouts



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and hand-clapping drowned even the noise of the breaking waves. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepped forward, followed by his brother, and received the Swami garlanding him with a beautiful Jasmine wreath. Then came a rush. . . . No amount of physical force could hold back the great multitude. . . . At the entrance to Barnes Street, a handsome triumphal arch formed of branches, leaves, and cocoanut flowers bore a motto of welcome to the Swami. All too soon, the splendid pair of horses that awaited his landing in front of the G. O. H., carried away the Swami to the pandal in Barnes Street. Every available carriage was in use and hundreds of pedestrians wended their way to the triumphal pandal which was decorated with palms, evergreens, etc. There the Swami alighting from the carriage, walked in procession attended with due Hindu honours, the flag, the sacred umbrella, the spreading of the white cloth, etc. An Indian band played select airs. A host of persons joined the procession at Barnes Street, and then, together with the Swami, marched on to another beautiful and artistic pandal in front of the bungalow prepared for his temporary residence in Cinnamon Gardens. Both sides of the road leading from the first pandal to the second, a distance of a quarter of a mile, were lined with arches festooned with palm leaves. As soon as the Swami entered the second pandal, a beautiful artificial lotus flower unfolded its petals and out flew a bird. These charming decorations went unnoticed, for all eyes were on the Swami. In their struggle to see him, some of the decorations were destroyed. The sage and his disciples took their seats amidst a shower of flowers. After silence was restored, a musician played a charming air on his violin; then the sacred Tamil hymns the 'Thevaram,' two thousand years old, were sung; a Sanskrit hymn composed especially in the Swami's honour was also intoned. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepping forward, bowed to the Swami in oriental fashion and then read an address of welcome on behalf of the Hindus.

"The Swami rose amidst deafening cheers and responded to the address in an eloquent and impressive style, peculiarly his own. The huge audience were carried away by his words, —simple and plain though they were.

"In the course of his reply he pointed out that the demonstration had not been made in honour of a great politician, or a great soldier, or a millionaire. 'The spirituality of the Hindus,' he said, 'is revealed by the princely reception which they have given to a begging Sannyâsin.' He was not a

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general, not a prince, not a wealthy man, yet men great in the transitory possessions of the world, and much respected had come to honour him, a poor Sannyâsin. 'This,' he said, 'is one of the highest expressions of spirituality.' He urged the necessity of making religion the backbone of the national life, if the nation was to live, and disclaimed any personal character in the welcome he had received, insisting that it was but the recognition of a principle.

"The Swami then entered the house. Here another garland was placed around his neck, and he was escorted to a seat. The people who had taken part in the formal proceedings of the meeting were standing outside and were unwilling to disperse. Finding that many were waiting to see him again, Swamiji came out and after the manner of Sannyâsins he saluted and blessed them all."

During the succeeding days, the bungalow occupied by the Swami (which was henceforth named 'Vivekananda Lodge') was thronged incessantly by visitors. It became, indeed, a place of pilgrimage, the honour and respect shown to the Swami being something of which no conception can be formed by those who are unaccustomed to the religious demonstrations of the East. Among the many visitors were men of all stations in life, from the first officials in Ceylon to the poorest of the poor. An interesting incident may here be mentioned. A poor woman, who was evidently in distress, came to see the Swami, bearing in her hand the customary offering of fruit. Her husband had left her in order that he might be undisturbed in his search for God. The woman wanted to know more about God, so that she could follow in his footsteps. The Swami advised her to read the Bhagavad Gita and pointed out to her that the best way to make religion practical for one in her station, was the proper fulfilment of household duties. Her reply was very significant. "I can read it, Swamiji," she said, "but what good will that do me if I cannot understand it and feel it?"—a striking example, first, of the truth of the saying

## TRIUMPHAL MARCH

that religion does not rest in books, and, secondly, of the amount of deep religious thought to be found even among the poor and apparently uneducated of the East.

In the evening of the 16th the Swami gave a stirring address in the Floral Hall to an audience which overflowed the building. The subject of this first public lecture in the East, after his arrival from his triumphs in the West, was, 'India, the Holy Land.'

The following day, Sunday, was again spent in receiving visitors until the evening, when the Swami paid a visit to the temple of Siva. The crowd which accompanied him was immense, and a most interesting characteristic of the evening was the repeated stopping of the carriage in order that the Swami might receive gifts of fruit, that garlands of flowers might be placed round his neck and rose-water sprinkled over him. It is a custom in Southern India and Ceylon, when an especially honoured guest pays a visit to a house, to burn lights and display fruit on the threshold, and this was done at almost every Hindu dwelling which the procession passed, particularly in Chècku Street, the heart of the Tamil quarter of Colombo. At the Temple the Swami was received with shouts of 'Jaya Mahâdeva!' (Victory unto the Great God!) After worshipping the Lord and holding a short converse with the priests and others who had assembled, the Swami returned to his bungalow where he found a number of Brâhmans with whom he conversed until half past two the following morning.

On Monday, the Swami paid a visit to Mr. Chelliah, whose house was decorated for this purpose in a most artistic fashion. Hearing that he was to arrive, thousands of spectators were waiting for him and when his carriage drew nearer and nearer, the

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enthusiastic cheering increased more and more, and garlands after garlands and loose flowers were showered upon him. He was seated in a place especially prepared for him, and the sacred waters of the Ganges were sprinkled over him. The Swami then distributed sacred ashes which all received with sacramental joy. A picture of his own Master, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, having attracted the Swami's attention, he at once got up and with great reverence made obeisance thereto. He then partook of light refreshments and expressed his joy on seeing that the house contained pictures of saints. This interesting meeting was brought to a close by the singing of several sacred songs.

In the evening, the Swami delivered a second lecture to another large audience on the Vedānta philosophy, at the Public Hall of Colombo. The audience listened to a most powerful and lucid exposition of the Advaita philosophy. The central theme of his address was the advocacy of a universal religion, based on the Vedas. In the course of his lecture the Swami's attention was drawn to the European dress in which many Indians had appeared. He was evidently annoyed, and feeling it his duty, he cautioned them against such slavish imitation. He said that European dress did not suit Orientals. It was not this dress or that which he recommended in particular, but it was the manner in which he found his countrymen foolishly aping foreign ways that called forth his criticism.

In the morning of the 19th the Swami left Colombo for Kandy by train in a special saloon. His original intention was to take a steamer direct from Colombo to Madras, but on his arrival in Ceylon so many telegrams poured in beseeching a visit to Ceylonese and Southern Indian towns, if only

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in passing, that he was induced to alter his plans and make the journey overland. At the railway station at Kandy a large crowd awaited him with an Indian band and the temple insignia, to convey him in procession to a bungalow in which he was to take rest. When the cheering which greeted his arrival had subsided, an address of welcome was read.

The reply was again brief, and after a few hours' rest, during which the interesting points of the beautiful town were visited, the journey was resumed and Metale reached the same evening. On Wednesday morning the Swami began a coach-ride of two hundred miles,—through a country, the beauty of whose vegetation has placed it among the brightest spots in the world,—to Jaffna. A few miles beyond Dambool, a mishap occurred. One of the front wheels of the coach was smashed in descending a hill, necessitating a stoppage of three hours on the roadside. Fortunately, the wheel did not come entirely off, or the carriage would have been overturned. After a long wait, only one bullock-cart was secured from a distant village, and in it was put Mrs. Sevier with all the luggage. Then progress was made but slowly, as the Swami and his companions had to walk several miles before they got other bullock-carts. They passed the night in the carts and reached Anurâdhapura passing through Kanahari, and Tinpani, about eight hours late.

Under the shade of the sacred Bo-tree the Swami gave a short address, to a crowd of two to three thousand people, interpreters translating, as he proceeded, into Tamil and Singalese. The subject was 'Worship,' and he exhorted his hearers to give practical effect to the teachings of the Vedas, rather than pay attention to mere empty worship. When the Swami had proceeded so far, a huge crowd of fanatic

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Buddhists, Bhikshus and householders—men, women and children—gathered round him and created such a horrid noise by beating drums, gongs, cans, etc., in order to stop the lecture, that he was obliged to conclude abruptly. It would have ended in a serious riot between the Hindus and the Buddhists, had it not been for the persuasive appeal from the Swami to the Hindus urging them to practise restraint and patience under such provocation. This led the Swami to speak of the universality of religion, and, in this stronghold of Buddhism, he urged that the God worshipped either as Siva, as Vishnu, as Buddha, or under any other name was one and the same, thus showing the necessity not only for tolerance but also for sympathy between followers of different creeds.

From Anuradhapura to Jaffna is a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, and as the roads and the horses were equally bad, the journey was troublesome, saved from tediousness only by the exceeding beauty of the surroundings. Indeed, on two successive nights, sleep was lost. On the way, however, a welcome break was the reception of the Swami with all honour at Vavoniya, and the presentation of an address.

After the Swami had replied briefly, the journey was resumed through the beautiful Ceylon jungles to Jaffna. There was a reception of an informal character early the following morning at Elephant Pass where a bridge connects Ceylon with the Island of Jaffna. Twelve miles from the town of Jaffna, the Swami was met by many of the leading Hindu citizens, and a procession of carriages accompanied him for the remainder of the distance. Every street in the town, nay, every house was decorated in his honour. The scene, in the evening, when the Swami was driven in a torch-light procession to a large

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pandal erected at the Hindu College, was most impressive. All along the route there was great enthusiasm, and there must have been at least ten to fifteen thousand people accompanying him.

A local newspaper describing the public reception given to the Swami and his visit to Jaffna, says:

"It was arranged by the Reception Committee that the Swami was to be received privately at Uppar on Sunday morning by a deputation of seven members, and that the public demonstration in the town in his honour should be reserved for the evening. But it was found that one hundred persons, the elite of the Hindu society, were collected at Uppar anxiously awaiting his arrival on Sunday morning. Till 9 A.M., the coach with the distinguished monk and party accompanying him did not make its appearance. It was then resolved to go ahead another five miles and wait at Chavakachari. No sooner had that place been reached than the Swami and his party arrived by the mail coach. A procession was then formed to drive to the town, with the Swami, his Gurubhai, Swami Niranjanananda, and Mr. Naglingam in the first carriage,—a landau drawn by a pair—and the rest following in twenty carriages. It was 11-30 A.M., when the procession reached the town by the Central Road. In spite of the short time at the disposal of the Committee, grand preparations had been made to accord the Swami a fitting reception at the Hindu College in the evening. A magnificent pandal had been put up in front of the institution and most tastefully decorated. The whole way from the town to the College,—a distance of about two miles—was festooned and illuminated, more especially that part of the route from the Grand Bazaar. Hundreds of banana palms were planted on both sides of the road and bunting and flags adorned the whole route. The scene was exceedingly picturesque, and great enthusiasm prevailed among the people. Thousands from all parts of the Island came to the city to get a glimpse of the renowned monk, and gathered all along the route to give him welcome. From 6 P.M. to 12 P.M., the Jaffna Kangesantura Road, as far as the Hindu College, was impassable for carts and carriages. The torch-light procession, which started at 8-30 P.M., attended with Indian music, was unprecedentedly imposing. It is estimated that more than fifteen thousand persons, all on foot, took part in it. The whole distance of two miles was so densely crowded that it

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looked like a sea of heads, yet perfect order prevailed from start to finish. At the gate of almost every house on both sides of the road throughout the entire distance, were placed Niraikudam and lamps, the inhabitants expressing in this manner the highest honours that could be offered, according to the Hindu idea, to a great Sannyâsin. The Swami alighted from the carriage and worshipped at the Sivan and Kathiresan temples where he was garlanded by the temple priests. Along the way also, many garlands were offered him by the local residents, so that when he reached the College at 10 P.M., he was most beautiful to look upon. The pandal was crammed even hours before the Swami arrived. Hundreds were outside seeking admission. People of all denominations had come, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Mohammedans. At the entrance to the pandal the Swami was received by Mr. S. Chellappa Pillai, retired Chief Justice of Travancore, who conducted him to a raised dais and garlanded him.

"An address of welcome was then read, to which the Swami replied in a most eloquent way for about an hour. In the evening of the day following at 7 P.M., he spoke at the Hindu College, on Vedântism, for one hour and forty minutes. There were present about four thousand persons composed of the elite of Jaffna society, and one and all were electrified with the Swami's stirring words. Following the lecture, Mr. Sevier at the request of the audience addressed the assembly explaining why he had accepted Hinduism and why he had come to India with the Swami."

With his address at the Hindu College at Jaffna, the Swami's journey across Ceylon came to a close. So great was the impression created even by this brief visit that urgent requests were made to him at every place to send teachers of the Order to preach the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in the Island. Further telegrams and letters of invitation from the representative bodies of the various towns in the interior poured in, praying the Swami to pay them a short visit, but he had to refuse them for want of time. Besides, he was tired. "He would have been killed with kindness," as one of his companions remarked, "if he had stayed longer in Ceylon."



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At the Swami's request arrangements were made to convey him and his party immediately to his native land. The voyage of about fifty miles, with favourable weather was delightful. On Tuesday, January 26, at about 3 P.M., the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban Road. The Swami having been previously invited by the Raja of Ramnad to Rameswaram, was about to leave for Rameswaram when he heard that the Raja had come in person to meet him at Pamban. The Swami was transferred from the ship to the State-boat of the Raja; as soon as he entered it, the Raja and all his staff prostrated themselves before him. The meeting between the Prince and the monk was a most touching one; the Swami feelingly said that as the Raja had been one of the first to conceive the idea of his going to the West and had encouraged and helped him to do so, it was apt that he should meet the Raja first on landing on Indian soil. When the State-boat reached the shore he was given a tremendous ovation by the citizens of Pamban. Here, under a decorated pandal, an address of welcome was read and presented to him. The Raja added to this a brief personal welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling, and then the Swami gave a short reply pointing out that the backbone of the Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, but religion and religion alone, and it was this that India alone could give to the world. He concluded thanking the citizens of Pamban for their kind and cordial reception, and expressing his gratitude to the Raja of Ramnad for all that he had done for him.

The meeting over, the Swami was invited to enter the State-carriage of the Raja of Ramnad and

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was driven towards the Raj bungalow, the Raja himself walking with his court officials. At the command of the Raja the horses were unharnessed, and the people and the Raja himself drew the State-carriage through the town. For three days the Swami remained at Pamban to the delight of the citizens. The day following his arrival he paid a visit to the great temple of Rameswaram. This visit deeply touched the Swami as he recalled his journey thither five years ago, when as an unknown wandering Sannyâsin he had come there foot-sore and weary, thus bringing his pilgrimage throughout India to a close. How different were the circumstances under which he now visited it! When nearing the temple, the State-carriage in which the Swami was driven, was met by a procession which included elephants, camels, horses, the temple insignia, Indian music, and all the evidence of the respect that the Hindu pays to a Mahâtman. The temple jewels were displayed to the Swami and his disciples, and after they had been conducted through the building and shown its many architectural wonders—particularly the galleries supported by a thousand pillars—the Swami was requested to address the people who had assembled. And standing there on the sacred grounds of that famous temple of Siva, he delivered a stirring address on the true significance of a Tirtha, and of worship, charging the eager listeners, and through them all his co-religionists to worship Siva by seeing Him not in images alone, but in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased. Mr. Naglingam acted as Tamil interpreter. The Raja of Ramnad was beside himself with the great spirit of the occasion, and the very next day fed and clothed thousands of poor people. And in commemoration of this great occasion, the Raja erected a

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monument of victory, forty feet in height, bearing the following inscription :

*“ Satyameva Jayate.*

“This monument erected by Bhâskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot, where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda’s blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together with the Swami’s English disciples, on His Holiness’ return from the Western Hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness’ philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedânta.

“January 27, 1897.”

Then came the short trip from Pamban across to the mainland, and after breakfasting in one of the rest-houses provided by the charity of the Raja for the benefit of wayfarers, Tiruppullani was reached, where an informal reception was given to the Swami. It was well-nigh evening when Ramnad came in sight. The journey from the sea-coast proper was made by bullock-cart, but when nearing Ramnad, the Swami and party entered the State-boat which conveyed them across one of the large tanks that abound in Southern India. Thus the imposing reception took place on the banks of a lake, heightening the scenic effect of the great meeting. The Raja, it goes without saying, took the leading part in the ceremony of welcome, and introduced the Swami to the leading citizens of Ramnad.

The firing of cannon announced to the waiting thousands the arrival of the Swami; and at the time of landing numerous rockets shot forth into the air, and they continued to be fired at repeated intervals until the procession reached its goal. Marks of rejoicing and festivity were everywhere in evidence. The Swami was driven in the State-carriage, accompanied by the Raja’s own bodyguard under the command of his brother, while the Raja himself

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directed the course of the procession afoot. Numerous torches flared on either side of the road, and both Indian and European music added life to the already lively proceedings, the latter playing—"See the Conquering Hero Comes," both on the landing of the Swami and on his approach to the city proper. When half the distance had been traversed, the Swami at the request of the Raja descended from the State-carriage and took his seat in the handsome State-palanquin. Attended with all this pomp, he reached the Sankara Villa.

After a short rest, he was led into the large audience hall where thousands had gathered knowing that he would speak to them in reply to their address of welcome. As he entered the hall, shouts of triumph and joy resounded, renewing the great enthusiasm which had been manifested all along the Swami's line of march by jubilant crowds. The Raja opened the meeting with a speech in which he highly eulogised the Swami, and then called upon his brother, Raja Dinakara Sethupathi, to read an address of welcome, which was then presented to the Swami enclosed in a massive casket of solid gold of the most exquisite design and workmanship.

The Swami's reply was characterised as was usual with most of his Indian lectures, by the richness and beauty of his thought and by his fiery eloquence; these in conjunction with the power of his personality roused the people to intense enthusiasm for their religion and the ideal of their national life and their duty to the Motherland.

The Raja closed the proceedings with the praiseworthy suggestion that the visit of the Swami to Ramnad should be commemorated by a public subscription to the Madras Famine Relief Fund.

During his stay at Ramnad the Swami received

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numerous visitors in addition to lecturing in the Christian Missionary School kindly lent for the purpose, and attending a Durbar at the palace held in his honour. On the latter occasion the great hall was brilliantly lighted, the Raja's own band playing. Here he received further addresses in Tamil and Sanskrit to which he replied, graciously referring to the large-heartedness of the Raja and to his religious temperament. He conferred on the Raja the title of 'Râjarshi,' signifying thereby that the Raja was both a ruler and a sage in one. At the earnest solicitation of the Raja the Swami then gave a short address into a phonograph on the need of Sakti-worship in India. Following on the visit to the palace on the Sunday evening, a fresh start was made at midnight for the journey northwards to Madras.

Paramakudi was the first stopping-place after leaving Ramnad, and there was a demonstration on a large scale, many thousands following him in procession. An address of welcome was given to which the Swami made a touching reply.

At Manamadura, where the next halt was made, the Swami was taken in a long procession to a huge pandal under which, amidst deafening shouts of enthusiasm, an address of welcome, both of the citizens of the neighbouring town of Sivaganga and those of Manamadura, was tendered him. He replied in a few well-chosen words.

Again the journey was resumed—it was one continuous tour of triumph—until Madura, the ancient city famous for its learning and magnificent temples and memories of old kingdoms, was reached. At this place the Swami was housed in the beautiful bungalow of the Raja of Ramnad. In the afternoon an address of welcome in a velvet casket was presented

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to him to which he replied with great fire and feeling.

Three weeks of continuous travelling, speaking and ovations had tired him physically, but the vigour of his mind and spirit was indefatigable. Though in some places he visited he was not fit physically, to deliver public speeches and receive visitors at all times of the day, he waived aside all consideration of his body and rose equal to the demands of the occasion. His heart was gladdened to see such tremendous religious zeal and enthusiasm among his people, which led him to hope for great things to come in the future.

• While in Madura the Swami paid a visit to the Minakshi temple, where he was received with marked respect. He spoke most cordially with the temple priests and referred enthusiastically to the marvellous architecture and art the temple embodied. In the evening he entrained for Kumbakonum. All along the way, at each station at which the train stopped, crowds of people were in waiting to welcome him with immense enthusiasm. Even the smallest villages sent their quota of representatives. At every station garlands of flowers and short addresses of welcome were presented, and the people pressed in and about the train to have a glimpse of their hero; it was as though they had come to see a royal pageant. The Swami in a few words replied most suitably to their addresses of welcome and regretted that time did not permit him to accede to their request to stay for a day at every stop. At Trichinopoly, in particular, at four o'clock in the morning, there were over a thousand people on the platform, who presented him with an address. Addresses were also presented from the Council of the National High School, Trichinopoly, and also from the student population of that renowned

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city. The replies to these addresses were necessarily brief. At Tanjore somewhat later, another large demonstration was made.

It might be imagined, from the previous demonstrations of honour and praise which he had received from all quarters, that his reception at Kumbakonum would be equally spontaneous and imposing. So it was. The citizens knew no bounds to their great enthusiasm and rejoicings. The Swami took rest here for three days as he knew heavy work was awaiting him in Madras. Two addresses of welcome were given to him, embodying the sentiments respectively of the Hindu community at large and of the Hindu students of the town. In reply the Swami delivered one of the most stirring addresses of his whole tour, entitled "The Mission of the Vedânta."

At all the towns on his way to Madras, the Swami met with the same enthusiastic greetings. At Mayavaram the citizens gathered in huge numbers filling the whole of the station platform, and a committee headed by Mr. D. Natesa Aiyer presented him with an address. In reply the Swami thanked the assembly, saying with humility that he had only fulfilled the mission which the Lord had commissioned him to do. He was grateful, he said, that his small labours should meet with such heart-felt response from the nation. The train steamed off amidst wild shouts of "Jaya Swami Vivekananda Maharajjiki Jaya!"

A remarkable incident which speaks volumes for the love and adoration in which the Swami was held by the millions of Southern India took place at a small railway station, some few miles from the Madras city proper. Hundreds of people had assembled there to get a glimpse of the "Great Teacher" and pay their homage to him. The train was a 'through' train and was not to stop at that station. The crowds

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importuned the station-master to flag the train to make it stop if only for a few minutes, but to no avail. At last, seeing the train coming in the distance, hundreds of people fell flat upon the railway line, determined by this extreme course to stop the train! The station-master was panic-stricken. The guard of the incoming train realised the situation and at once ordered the train to be stopped. The people crowded round the Swami's carriage and sent forth shouts of triumph in his honour. The Swami, visibly stirred by this display of emotion, appeared for a few moments before them, extending his hands lovingly in blessing, and briefly thanked them with all his heart.

Great enthusiasm prevailed for weeks in the city of Madras and its environs over the home-coming of Swami Vivekananda. Extensive preparations were being made for the Swami's reception. The streets and thoroughfares of the great city were profusely decorated; seventeen triumphal arches were erected; blazing mottoes of welcome such as, "Long Live the Venerable Vivekananda!" "Hail, Servant of God!" "Hail, Servant of all Great Sages of the Past!" "Hearty Greetings of Awakened India!" "Greetings to the Swami Vivekananda!" "Hail, Harbinger of Peace!" "Hail, Sri Ramakrishna's Worthy Son!", "Welcome, Prince of Men!" were everywhere in evidence. Amongst Sanskrit Slokas was "Ekam Sat Viprâh Bahudhâ Vadanti!" For days previous, committees of reception and arrangement had been at work and Madras papers were filled with editorials concerning the Swami and the grand preparations that were being made for giving him a fitting reception. On the day of his arrival, representatives of leading papers like *The Hindu*, *The Madras Mail*, etc., met him at



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Chingleput and travelled with him to Madras for interviews. The *Madras Times* wrote as follows:

‘For the past few weeks, the Hindu public of Madras have been most anxiously expecting the arrival of Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu monk of world-wide fame. At the present moment his name is on everybody’s lips. In the schools, in the colleges, in the High Court, on the Marina, and in the streets and bazaars of Madras, hundreds of eager persons may be seen asking everybody, ‘When will the Swami Vivekananda come?’ Large numbers of students from the moffussil, who have come up for the university examinations, are staying here, awaiting the Swami, and increasing their hostelry bills, despite the urgent call of their parents to return home immediately for the holidays. From the nature of the receptions received elsewhere in this Presidency, from the preparations being made here, from the triumphal arches, erected at Castle Kernan, where the ‘Prophet’ is to be lodged at the cost of the Hindu public, and from the interest taken in the movement by the leading Hindu gentlemen of this city, like the Hon. Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer, there is no doubt that the Swami will have a grand reception. It was Madras that first recognised the superior merits of the Swami and equipped him for his journey to Chicago. Madras will now have again the honour of welcoming the undoubtedly great man who has done so much to raise the prestige of his motherland. Four years ago when the Swami came here, he was practically an obscure individual. In an unknown bungalow at St. Thome, he spent some two months holding conversations on religious topics and teaching and instructing all comers who cared to listen to him. Even then a few educated young men with a ‘keener eye’ predicted that there was something in the man, ‘a power’ that would lift him above all others, and pre-eminently enable him to be the leader of men. These young men who were then despised as ‘mis-guided enthusiasts,’ ‘dreamy revivalists,’ have now the supreme satisfaction of seeing ‘their Swami,’ as they loved to call him, return to them with a great European and American fame. The Mission of the Swami is essentially spiritual. . . . Whatever differences of opinion followers of other creeds may have with him, . . . few will venture to deny that the Swami has done yeoman service to his country in opening the eyes of the Western world to ‘the good in the Hindu.’ He will always be remembered as the first Hindu Sannyāsin who dared to

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cross the sea to carry to the West the message of what he believes in as a religious peace. . . .”

From the early hours of the morning the city wore a festive air and thousands were making their way to the railway station, many of them carrying flags and flowers, symbols of their joy and triumph. When the train, conveying the distinguished monk, steamed into the Madras Station, the Swami was received with thundering shouts of applause and with an enthusiasm unprecedented in the annals of Madras. After the preliminary reception, an elaborate procession commenced, the horses of the Swami's carriage were unharnessed and the citizens of Madras took their places. Tens of thousands of people crowded the streets. From windows and verandahs people sought to gain a glimpse of the great procession which wended its way by a circuitous route to the palatial residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, known as the “Castle Kernan.” All along the way the Swami, now sitting, now standing, constantly bowed in recognition of the plaudits of the crowd. The cynosure of all eyes, he appeared in the midst of that procession like a conqueror returning from the battle-field, crowned with glory—not a conqueror of earthly dominions, but a conqueror of hearts, both Eastern and Western.

A leading paper describing the Swami's entrance into Madras and the public reception accorded to him writes :

“Due to previous information widely disseminated that Swami Vivekananda would arrive at Madras this morning by the South Indian Railway, the Hindus of Madras, of all ages and of all ranks, including young children in primary schools, grown-up students in colleges, merchants, pleaders and judges, people of all shades and varieties, and in some instances, even women, turned up to welcome the Swami on his return from his successful mission in the West. The railway station at

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Egmore, being the first place of landing in Madras, had been well fitted up by the Reception Committee who had organised the splendid reception in his honour. Admission to the platform was regulated by tickets rendered necessary by the limited space in the interior of the station; the whole platform was full. In this gathering all the familiar figures in Madras public life could be seen. The train steamed in at about 7-30 A.M., and as soon as it came to a standstill in front of the south platform, the crowds cheered lustily and clapped their hands, while a native band struck up a lively air. The members of the Reception Committee received the Swami on alighting. The Swami was accompanied by his Gurubhais, the Swami's Niranjanananda and Sivananda, and by his European disciple Mr. J. J. Goodwin. On being conducted to the dais, he was met by Captain and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, who had arrived on the previous day with Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Harrison, Buddhists from Colombo and admirers of the Swami. The procession then wended its way along the platform, towards the entrance, amidst deafening cheers and clapping of hands, the band leading. At the portico, introductions were made. The Swami was garlanded as the band struck up a beautiful tune. After conversing with those present for a few minutes, he entered a carriage and pair that was in waiting, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer and his Gurubhais, and drove off to Castle Kernan, the residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, Attorney, where he will reside during his stay in Madras. The Egmore Station was decorated with flags, palm leaves and foliage plants, and red baize was spread on the platform. The 'Way Out' gate had a triumphal arch with the words, 'Welcome to the Swami Vivekananda.' Passing out of the compound, the crowds surged still denser and denser, and at every move, the carriage had to halt repeatedly to enable the people to make offerings to the Swami. In most instances, the offerings were in the Hindu style, the presentation of fruits and cocoanuts, something in the nature of an offering to a god in a temple. There was a perpetual shower of flowers at every point on the route and under the 'Welcome' arches which spanned the whole route of the procession from the station to the Ice-House, along the Napier Park, via Chintadripet, thence turning on the Mount Road opposite the Government House, wending thence along the Wallaja Road, the Chepauk and finally across the Pycrofts' Road to the South Beach. During the progress of the procession along the route described, the receptions accorded to the Swami at the

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several places of halt were no less than royal ovations. The decorations and the inscriptions on the arches were expressive of the profoundest respect and esteem and the universal rejoicing of the local Hindu Community and also of their appreciation of his services to Hinduism. The Swami halted opposite the City Stables in an open pandal and there received addresses with the usual formalities of garlanding.

“Speaking of the intense enthusiasm that characterised the reception, one must not omit to notice an humble contribution from a venerable-looking old lady, who pushed her way to the Swami’s carriage through the dense crowds, in order to see him, that she might thereby be enabled, according to her belief, to wash off her sins as she regarded him as an Incarnation of Sambandha Moorthy. We make special mention of this to show with what feeling of piety and devotion His Holiness was received this morning, and indeed in Chintadripet and elsewhere; camphor offerings were made to him, and at the place where he is encamped, the ladies of the household received him with Arathi, or the ceremony of waving lights, incense and flowers as before an image of God. The procession had necessarily to be slow, very slow indeed, on account of the halts made to receive the offerings, and so the Swami did not arrive at Castle Kernan until half-past nine, his carriage being in the meanwhile dragged by the students who unharnessed the horses at the turn to the Beach and pulled it with great enthusiasm. Arrived at the Castle Kernan, Mr. Krishnamachariar, B.A., B.L., High Court Vakil, read a Sanskrit address on behalf of the Madras Vidvanmanoranjini Sabhâ. This was followed by a Canarese address. At the close of this ceremony, Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer asked the gathering to disperse in order to let the Swami rest after the fatigue of his journey, which was done. The Swami was installed in one of the magnificent chambers in the upper storey of the Castle Kernan.

“Never since its earliest days has Madras witnessed such an enthusiastic reception accorded to anyone, European or Indian. Of all the official receptions that were ever held in Madras, none could equal the one given to Swami Vivekananda. Such an ovation has not been witnessed in Madras within the memory of the oldest man, and we dare say that the scenes of today will remain for ever in the memory of the present generation.”

A programme was at once drawn by some

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prominent citizens of Madras to regulate the presentation of addresses by different organisations as well as the addresses to be delivered by the Swami. It was settled that his first public appearance and address was to be in reply to the address on behalf of the people of Madras, after which there were to be four more devoted to a comprehensive and detailed exposition of his message to the world and to India and to the means and method for creating a national spiritual life in India in accordance with its altered conditions. The following subjects were chosen as topics for the Swami's lecture:

- (1) My plan of campaign
- (2) The Sages of India
- (3) Vedânta in its relation to practical life
- (4) The future of India

The Swami approved of the programme. He also consented to deliver an address to the Triplicane Literary Society on "Some aspects of my work in India." In addition, he gave two morning sittings at the Castle to meet people who desired to ask him questions.

The Swami's stay in Madras was a nine days' festival, a veritable "Navarâtri." Altogether twenty-four addresses were presented to Swami Vivekananda, in English, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telegu. He also presided at the Annual Meeting of the Chennapuri Annadâna Samâjam, an institution of a charitable nature, and gave a brief address in which he pointed out the superiority of the Hindu idea of charity to that of the legalised methods of other nations. He also paid a visit to the rooms of the Madras Social Reform Association.

But to return to a detailed account of his activities during his nine days' stay at Madras. The following account is taken from an extremely interesting article,

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published in the *Vedânta Kesari*, by Prof. Sundararama Iyer, M.A. He was, it may be remembered, the host of the Swami at Trivandrum when the unknown monk was there during his pilgrimages.

Shortly after his arrival in response to the demands of some of his followers in Madras, the Swami sang one of Jaydeva's songs in a marvellous voice and in a Râga (tune) different from any ever heard in that part of the country. "The impression received," writes the professor, "is one never to be effaced, and the Swami was in one of the lighter aspects of his complex nature." From the first day to the last of his visit he was besieged at all hours by visitors of all classes and of both sexes. Many women of respectable families came to the Castle Kernan as if they were visiting a temple. Their devotional feeling reached its climax when they gained admission and prostrated themselves before the Swami as if he were an Avatâr or Âchârya revisiting the scene of his labours. There were crowds constantly waiting in front of the Castle at all hours of the day and even after dark. Writes Prof. Sundararama Iyer:

"It had gone forth that he was an Avatâra of Sambandha-Swami (Siva) and the idea was taken up everywhere with absolute truthfulness by the common people. Whenever a glimpse of him was caught, as he passed to and fro in the Castle grounds or as he was getting into his coach on his way to one of the meetings, they prostrated *en masse* before him. The scene on such occasions was as impressive as it was unusual, emphasizing as it did that in the heart of the nation was a deep reverence for renunciation of the world's vanities and its unsubstantial fleeting attachments; that it still regarded it to be the sole means to the attainment of the lotus feet of the Supreme and the resulting liberation from the miseries in the material universe."

When the appointed day, the third after his arrival, came for the Swami to receive the Madras address, he left the Castle Kernan at about 4 P.M. It

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was a day of universal and high expectations. The scene in front of the Victoria Hall and along the roads and by-ways leading to it defied description. The Swami's carriage could scarcely pass, so dense was the crowd. As the Swami and his party alighted from the carriage, there were loud cries of 'open air meeting' from the vast throng assembled in front of the Hall. It was arranged that the address to the Swami should be presented inside the Hall. It was filled to its utmost capacity. Sir V. Bhashyam Ayyangar was already in the Chair. The Swami took his seat on the dais by his side, and Mr. M. O. Parthasarathi Ayyangar read the address. Meanwhile loud and continuous shouts of 'open air meeting' from outside interrupted the proceedings within. The Swami's heart was touched; he felt that he could not disappoint the countless young men, eager and enthusiastic, assembled out of doors. So he went forth to meet and mingle with the throng which broke into thundering applause when he appeared. But the noise was so deafening that the Swami could not make himself heard. He was compelled to speak from the top of a Madras Coach,—'in Gita fashion,' as he called it, to the mirth of all who heard him, meaning that there was some sort of distant analogy between himself speaking from a coach and imparting his counsel and inspiration to his people at the dawn of a new epoch and Sri Krishna delivering his message of Yoga to a world which had allowed it to sink into oblivion. He spoke briefly, clearly enunciating the central truths of Hinduism, how through renunciation, love and fearlessness souls were to be helped to cross the ocean of Samsâra into the joy of Truth and the realisation of the Self; how India had, through love for God or Self, expanded the limited, concentrated and intense love of a family into the love of

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country and humanity. He concluded by thanking all, urging them to 'keep up' their enthusiasm and to give him all the help he 'required' from them 'to do great things for India' and to carry out all his plans for the revival of the race. This was followed by his four other public lectures delivered on February 9, 11, 13 and 14, two in the Victoria Hall, one in the Pacheyappa's and the last in Harmston's circus pavilion. His ideas aroused the latent energies of the Indian nation; he reminded the Indians of their greatness and their weaknesses as well, now pointing to their glorious heritage and the still more glorious destiny they were to fulfil in the future, now admonishing them like a Guru, pointing out the evils of their mistaken course and the dangers ahead on the path to their salvation as a nation. He made them self-conscious, proud of their past and hopeful of their future and at the same time ashamed of their weakness and impotency and bade them gird up their loins.

A few interesting events happened during the Swami's stay in Madras. On February 8, a deputation came to him—all Saivites, from Tirupattur to ask him questions about the fundamental points of the Advaita philosophy. The first question was—"How does the Unmanifested become the manifest!" The Swami replied that the question was illogical for 'how' and 'why' can be asked only of the relative and not of the Absolute and that he could answer questions only when they were put in a logical form. In the resulting deadlock the questioners felt that they had met their match. Then the Swami said, "The best way to serve and to seek God is to serve the needy, to feed the hungry, to console the stricken, to help the fallen and friendless, to attend and serve those who are ill and require service." The



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deputation listened to the Swami's passionate plea for service to humanity and as they took their departure, their countenances showed that their hearts had been touched and that a new light had been thrown on life and work.

On the morning of February 12, there came a young European lady of high intelligence, who put to him various questions on the subject of Vedânta. The Swami's resources of knowledge and argument were displayed in full to the delight and enlightenment of the lady and the entire audience. She expressed her gratitude to the Swami, and told him that she would be leaving for London in a few days to resume her social work among the dwellers in its slums and hoped that it would be her great privilege to meet him again. As she left the room, the Swami rose from his seat and advanced a few steps to see that way was made for her to leave the meeting, and remained standing till she bowed and retired. In the afternoon she returned with her father who was a Christian Missionary in Madras, and sought and obtained for him an interview which lasted nearly an hour. In answer to Prof. Sundararama Iyer's question as to how he found the strength for such incessant activity, the Swami said, "Spiritual work never tires one in India."

Another interesting incident occurred the same evening. A Vaishnava Pandit discussed in Sanskrit with the Swami some difficult points in the Vedânta. The Swami patiently listened to the Pandit, then turned to the audience and said in English that he did not care to waste his time in fruitless wranglings on doctrinal details of no practical value. The Pandit then asked the Swami to tell him in precise language whether he was an Advaitin or Dvaitin. The Swami replied in English, "Tell the Pandit that so long as

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I have this body I am a Dualist, but not afterwards. This incarnation of mine is to help to put an end to useless and mischievous quarrels and puzzles which only distract the mind, and make men weary of life and even turn them into sceptics and atheists." The Pandit then said in Tamil, "The Swami's statement is really an avowal that he is an Advaitin." The Swami rejoined, "Let it be so," and the matter was dropped.

Meanwhile he was receiving letters from his Western disciples and from the Vedânta Societies in America and England, informing him of the progress of the work and congratulating him on his successful propaganda there. Among other valuable papers which he received was the following address, the signatories to which include some of the most distinguished minds in the history of American thought:

"TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA,—INDIA

"Dear Friend and Brother,

"As members of the Cambridge Conferences devoted to comparative study in Ethics, Philosophy and Religion, it gives us great pleasure to recognise the value of your able expositions of the Philosophy and Religion of Vedânta in America and the interest created thereby among thinking people. We believe such expositions as have been given by yourself and your co-labourer, the Swami Saradananda, have more than mere speculative interest and utility,—that they are of great ethical value in cementing the ties of friendship and brotherhood between distant peoples, and in helping us to realise that solidarity of human relationships and interests which has been affirmed by all the great religions of the world.

"We earnestly hope that your work in India may be blessed in further promoting this noble end, and that you may return to us again with assurances of fraternal regard from our distant brothers of the great Aryan Family, and the ripe wisdom that comes from reflection and added experience and further contact with the life and thought of your people.

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"In view of the large opportunity for effective work presented in these Conferences, we should be glad to know something of your own plans for the coming year, and whether we may anticipate your presence with us again as a teacher. It is our hope that you will be able to return to us, in which event we can assure you the cordial greetings of old friends and the certainty of continued and increasing interest in your work.

"We remain,

"Cordially and Fraternally yours,

LEWIS G. JANES, D.D. *Director*,

C. C. EVERETT, D.D.,

WILLIAM JAMES,

JOHN H. WRIGHT,

JOSIAH ROYCE,

J. E. LOUGH,

A. O. LOVEJOY,

RACHEL KENT TAYLOR,

SARA C. BULL,

JOHN P. FOX."

Dr. Janes, as the reader knows, was the President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association; Professor C. C. Everett was the Dean of the Harvard Divinity School; Professor William James of the Harvard University was one of the leading psychologists and philosophers in the Western Hemisphere; Professor Wright was the Harvard Professor of Greek, who, it will be remembered, aided the Swami to secure credentials for the Parliament of Religions; Professor Royce was the Harvard Professor of Philosophy and an extremely able metaphysician, who admittedly owed much to Swami Vivekananda; Mrs. Bull was the promoter of the Cambridge Conferences and one of the foremost women in America and Norway; Mr. Fox was the acting honorary secretary of the Cambridge Conferences. Still another letter from the Brooklyn Ethical Association, equally eulogistic and much to the same effect, was received by the Swami at this time, addressed, "To our Indian Brethren of the Great

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Aryan Family," and bearing the signatures of E. Sidney Sampson, President, and Lewis G. Janes, Ex-President, of the Association. Copies of this address were printed and widely circulated in Madras to an eager and grateful public.

Still another address of greeting was sent to Swami Vivekananda, signed by forty-two of his especial friends at Detroit; it reads:

"From this far-away city, in a land, old yet young, ruled by a people who are a part of the ancient Aryan race, the mother of nations, we send to you in your native country—India, the conservator of the wisdom of the ages—our warmest love and sincerest appreciation of the message you brought to us. We, Western Aryans, have been so long separated from our Eastern brothers that we had almost forgotten our identity of origin, until you came and with beautiful presence and matchless eloquence rekindled within our hearts the knowledge that we of America and you of India are one.

"May God be with you! May blessings attend you! May All-Love and All-Wisdom guide you!

" 'Om Tat Sat Om! ' "

Among other papers received by the Swami, mention may be made of one, the reading of which delighted him, not so much for its touching tribute to himself, but for the fact that his Gurubhai had been warmly received by his friends and disciples in New York and had made a promising beginning. On the occasion of presenting an address of welcome to Swami Saradananda at the New Century Hall, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, on January 16, by the students of the Vedânta Society of the City, Dr. E. G. Day was reported to have spoken as follows:

"Among the audience I recognise the faces of many who gathered to hear the sublime teachings of the Vedânta from the lips of the gifted and well-beloved Master, Vivekananda, and of many who mourned when their friend and teacher left, and who earnestly long for his return. I wish to assure you that his mantle has fallen on worthy shoulders in the person

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of the Swami Saradananda who will now teach the Vedānta studies among us. I am sure that I voice your sentiments when I say that we are ready to extend to him the love and loyalty we had for his predecessor. Let us extend to the new Swami a hearty welcome."

On Monday, February 15, the Swami left for Calcutta by steamer. To the request that he should remain in Madras and open a centre there he pointed out that it was impossible for him to do so just then but he promised to send one of his Gurubhais as his representative. Several of his admirers, followers and personal friends went to the wharf to see him off. Mr. Tilak had invited the Swami to Poona, and he first thought of going there. But he was in need of rest and pined for the quiet of the Himalayas. At the beach, several merchants of the Arya-Vaisya caste (known as Komattis) met him and presented a formal address of thanks for his services to the holy motherland. The Hon. Mr. Subba Rau of Rajahmundry presented the address to the Swami on their behalf. The Swami bowed in acknowledgment and spoke kindly with them. Several boarded the steamer, and remained with the Swami until the boat sailed. Professor Sundararama Iyer begged of the Swami the favour of a moment's interview apart to ask, "Swami, tell me if, indeed, you have done lasting good by your mission to such materialistic people as the Americans and others in the West." He replied, "Not much. I hope that here and there I have sown a seed which in time may grow and benefit some at least." The second query was,—“Shall we see you again, and will you continue your Mission work in South India?” He replied, “Have no doubt about that. I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region, and then burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche.”

## XXIX

### BACK TO BENGAL

The whole of the Bengal Presidency was alive with enthusiasm over the news that Swami Vivekananda had landed in India. Calcutta in particular was following with intense interest the movements and utterances of the Swami's triumphal progress from Colombo to Madras. A Reception Committee was formed, with the Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga as President, to receive him officially and to arrange for a public reception.

The Swami was looking forward eagerly to his return to the city of his birth. The boat trip from Madras was a boon to his tired nerves, for the continuous ovations, public speaking, and talking to visitors, had worn him out. It was to escape all this that he decided to travel by boat instead of by train. Before leaving Madras some of his admirers ordered a huge number of cocoanuts to be brought on board, the milk of which the Swami was to drink by the doctor's orders. Mrs. Sevier on seeing the quantity of cocoanuts asked, "Swami, is this a freight boat, that they are loading so many cocoanuts aboard?" He, very much amused, replied, "Why, no, not at all! They are my cocoanuts! A doctor has advised me to drink cocoanut-milk instead of water." He shared the fruit with the Captain and his fellow-passengers. When the steamer sailed up the Hooghly, the Swami pointed out to his disciples all the places of interest that he knew so well, as well as the places associated with his early youth and manhood.

The Reception Committee at Calcutta had been

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busy ever since the Swami had left Madras, and when the steamer docked at Kidderpore, there was a special train waiting to take him the following morning to the Sealdah Station. At about half past seven o'clock in the morning the Swami and his party boarded the train. Thousands of people were gathered at the Sealdah Station, Calcutta, from early morning to greet him. They were reading as they waited, copies of the two farewell addresses of his students in New York and London which were being distributed. When the whistle of the train was heard, a shout of joy rang out. When the train stopped, the Swami stood up and bowed to the multitude with joined palms. When he stepped from the carriage, those nearest him made a rush to take the dust of his feet; those further off shouted his name and that of his Master triumphantly. So dense were the crowds that it was with exceeding difficulty that the Reception Committee headed by Mr. Norendra Nath Sen, the editor of *The Indian Mirror*, could make way for the Swami to the carriage that was in waiting for him. Many Sannyâsins, in their Gerua robes, were in the crowd, some of them being his own Gurubhais. The Swami was literally loaded with garlands of sweet flowers and was visibly moved by the tremendous demonstration.

Hardly had the Swami with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier seated himself in the landau, when the horses were unharnessed and a band of Bengalee boys, mostly students, rushed forward to draw the carriage. A procession was then formed, headed by a band playing lively music, which moved in the direction of the Ripon College, its first stopping-place. A Sankirtana party followed at some distance in the rear singing religious songs with visible emotion, which lent added interest to the great occasion. Along the line of march the streets were decorated with flags and banners, flowers

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and evergreens. In Circular Road a triumphal arch of welcome was erected, bearing the inscription: "Hail, Swamiji!" In Harrison Road there was another with the salutation, "Jaya Ramakrishna!" And another still was constructed in front of the Ripon College bearing the word, "Welcome!" At the College itself there was a wild demonstration. Thousands had flocked thither to get a close view of the great Sannyâsin. Still thousands more pressed towards the College in the line of the procession, until a panic seemed imminent.

At the College an informal reception was held, the Swami replying briefly, as the Reception Committee had decided to postpone the public reception until a week later, so as to afford the citizens of Calcutta a more favourable opportunity of hearing him. After a short time, therefore, the Swami and his party left for Baghbazar, where they had been invited to a banquet by Rai Pashupati Nath Bose at his palatial residence. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the Swami and his European disciples were driven to the beautiful river-side residence of Gopal Lal Seal, in Cossipore, known as Seal's Garden, which was offered to the Swami and his friends for their temporary residence.

Continually, day after day, and every hour of the day, hundreds of people came to pay their personal respects to the Swami and to hear his exposition of Vedânta. Telegrams of congratulation and of welcome, and also invitations from various towns came pouring in. In the day-time he made his headquarters generally at the Cossipore mansion; at night he stayed at the Math which was then at Alambazar. The Swami had no rest. The task of receiving and entertaining countless visitors, and the constant discussion on strenuous intellectual



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subjects, which such visits entailed, were a great strain.

February 28, 1897, was the day, and the place chosen was the palatial residence of Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb Bahadur at Sobhabazar for the presentation of the City's address of welcome. When the Swami arrived, he was cordially welcomed by the most distinguished audience that had ever assembled in that historic capital of the British Empire in India. At least five thousand people had gathered in the inner quadrangle and verandahs all around, and the cheering which was evoked by his appearance was deafening. The meeting was presided over by Raja Binoy Krishna Deb Bahadur, who introduced the Swami as the foremost national figure in the life of India. There were present Rajas and Maharajas, Sannyâsins, a group of distinguished Europeans, many well-known Pandits, illustrious citizens, and hundreds of college students. The address of welcome was presented in a silver casket to the Swami, who replied in a speech that has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory, and of fervent patriotism. This brought him recognition, in an especial sense, as the Prophet of Modern India. He had defined in a new form the whole scope of Indian Consciousness and had given birth to entirely new ideas of national and public life. In this address one finds his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, proclaimed by him as God Incarnate, and held by him before the nation as a great spiritual ideal manifested for the good of all races and of all religions. The spirit of this lecture and of the Swami himself, made the profoundest impression, which has widened and deepened with the years, producing a New Order in modern India.

Shortly after the Swami's arrival in Calcutta the

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birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna came off. It was celebrated, as was usual at the time, at Dakshineswar, but the fact that Swami Vivekananda himself was to take part in the festival, drew large crowds to the temple of the Mother.

Accompanied by some of his Gurubhais, the Swami arrived at the temple-garden at about nine o'clock in the morning. He was barefooted, dressed in a long Alkhalla and wore a Gerua turban. The great multitude catching sight of him cried out the name of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda repeatedly. Vast crowds eager to see him and to take the dust of his feet thronged about him and followed him wherever he went. After a while he repaired to the temple of the Mother, followed by great numbers; there before the image he prostrated himself bowing his head to the ground in adoration, in company with the swarming crowd. The Swami next visited the shrine of Sri Radhakantaji, and then entered Sri Ramakrishna's room, which was full of devotees. Scores of Sankirtana parties were everywhere singing and dancing in the name of the Lord. Triumphant shouts of "Jaya Ramakrishna" echoed and re-echoed from one corner of the vast temple-garden to the other. As though on a pilgrimage, the Swami visited with great reverence the various places of religious interest; accompanied by his European disciples, who had come just then, he walked to the memorable Panchavati Tree, the meditation-seat and place of Illumination of the Paramahansa Deva, where he read a hymn to Sri Ramakrishna in Sanskrit, which was given to him by the composer.

Around the Panchavati, there were scores of devotees of the Great Master, but among them all, the Swami singled out Girish Chandra Ghosh. The

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two exchanged greetings, and the Swami comparing the present occasion with the former days when only a few attracted by the unique life of the Divine Master celebrated the birthday festival, said, "Well, what a difference between those days and these!" "I know that, but still there arises the desire to see more," replied the great dramatist, quoting from one of the Epics, where the Bhaktas longed to live on, even though miserable and afflicted, so that they might see more and more of the glories of the Lîlâ or Divine Career of the Lord Incarnate. The Swami then turned his steps in the direction of the Vilva tree, another scene of the austerities of Sri Ramakrishna.

The great masses that had congregated at the Dakshineswar temple-garden called upon him repeatedly to tell them of his Master. He made an effort to speak, but his voice was drowned in the tumult. Seeing that it was impossible to make himself heard, he gave up the attempt and mingled with the crowd for some time, exchanging friendly greetings and occasionally introducing his English disciples to distinguished Bhaktas of his Master. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, when the crowd had thinned, he returned to the Alambazar Math, in company with a Gurubhai and a disciple. On the way he talked to the latter of the necessity of religious festivals and other demonstrations of religious zeal and emotion for the general masses who cannot comprehend abstract ideas of Truth.

A few days after his reply to the address of welcome by the Calcutta public the Swami again lectured before it on "The Vedânta in All Its Phases." This address was another of those masterpieces of philosophical dissertation which mark his progress from Colombo to Almora. Taking

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his stand upon the unassailable ground that the Vedas and the Upanishads are the basis of all systems of philosophy or religion in India, he touched upon the Sâṅkhya, Yoga and Râmânuja systems, showing them as classifications of the Vedânta, and maintained that before Hindus were to be known even as Hindus they must first of all be "Vedântins." He pointed out that the Vedânta is the climax of systems of philosophy and religion, and stressed the necessity of renunciation. And in this lecture, as in others, he put before his hearers the glory of the Sanâtana Dharma and the greatness of the Upanishads and Vedânta. With them as foundations he felt that Hinduism could be restored to a vigorous life. He denounced hypocrisy and fanaticism; he contrasted the degenerating influence of the Vâmâchâra practices of the Tantras with the strengthening and ennobling power of the Upanishadic teachings. The Vedânta, he felt, should be the background of everything in India. This spirit permeated his entire discourse.

This address created a profound impression in the metropolis. The citizens came to understand now more fully that the Swami stood for the true spirit and the essentials of the Vedic Dharma. The beautiful eclecticism of the Vedânta as presented by the Swami appealed most to all.

During the Swami's stay in Calcutta, though he made his headquarters at the Seal's mansion and the Alambazar Math, yet he was constantly visiting one devotee of Sri Ramakrishna or another. He was entertained frequently by one or other of the princes of the metropolis, but he was also the guest of the most humble.

Many distinguished people, persons of various professions and callings as well as hundreds

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of enthusiastic youths and college students used to come daily to the Seal's Garden. Among the former some came to him out of curiosity, some thirsting for knowledge, and others to test his learning and powers. The questioners were invariably charmed with his knowledge and interpretation of the Sâstras, and even great masters of philosophy and university professors were amazed at his genius.

But his heart was with the educated, unmarried youths with whom he was never tired of speaking. He was consumed with the desire for infusing his own spirit into them, and to train some of the more energetic and religious among them, so that they might devote their lives to the salvation of their own souls and to the good of the world. He did not speak to them always on spiritual topics, nor was he too generous with his praise. He deplored their physical weakness, denounced early marriage, admonished them for their lack of faith in themselves and in their national culture and ideals,—but all this was done with such unmistakable love and kindness, that they became his staunchest disciples and followers. A few excerpts from the Swami's general conversations and descriptions of the private meetings in the Seal's Garden and elsewhere, as recorded by them, will be interesting and instructive to the readers, as showing the depth and the breadth of his vision and his teachings.

Some followers of the Krishna cult in Bengal, led by the erroneous impression that the Swami in his zeal for Vedântism did not present before the Western world that other aspect of Hinduism known as Vaishnavism, had tried during his absence in the West to make the most of this matter in order to belittle his mission in the eyes of his countrymen. But the Swami's own words gave the lie to these libels. In

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the course of an eloquent talk on the Vaishnava faith with one of its followers he said, "Babaji, once I gave a lecture in America on Sri Krishna. It made such an impression on a young and beautiful woman, heiress to immense wealth, that she renounced everything and retired to a solitary island, where she passed her days absorbed in meditation on Sri Krishna." Speaking of renunciation he said further,—“Slow but sure degradation creeps into those sects which do not practise and preach the spirit of renunciation.”

One day the Swami was talking with a young man who lived at the Bengal Theosophical Society. The latter said, "Swamiji, I frequent various sects but cannot decide what is Truth." The Swami replied in a most affectionate way, "My boy, you need have no fear; I was also once in the same state. Tell me what people of different faiths have instructed you and how you have followed their injunctions." The youth then said that a learned preacher of the Theosophical Society had clearly convinced him of the truth and utility of image-worship, and that he had accordingly done Pujâ and Japam for a long time with great devotion, but could not find peace. Then some one had advised him to try to make the mind void in times of meditation. He had struggled hard to do so, but still the mind did not become calm and controlled. "Sir," said the young man, "still I sit in meditation, shutting the door of my room, and closing my eyes as long as I can, but I cannot find peace of mind. Can you show me the way?"

"My boy," spoke the Swami in a voice full of loving sympathy, "if you take my word, you will have first of all to open the door of your room and look around instead of closing your eyes. There are hundreds of poor and helpless people in the neighbourhood of your house,—them you have to

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serve to the best of your ability. One who is ill and has no one to look after him,—for him you will have to get medicine and diet and nurse him; one who has nothing to eat,—you will have to feed him; one who is ignorant,—you will have to teach him, well-educated as you are. My advice to you is, if you want peace of mind, you have to serve others in this way as best as you can.”

But the questioner began to argue, “But suppose, sir, if in going to nurse a patient I myself fall ill through loss of sleep and irregular meals as well as by other irregularities—” The Swami replied rather sharply, “Why, boy, it is quite evident from your words and manners that you who are so mindful of your own bodily comforts, will never go out of your way or risk your health to nurse the sick !”

Another day, in course of a conversation, a distinguished disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, a professor of long-standing, asked him, “You talk of service, charity and doing good to the world,—those are, after all, in the domain of Mâyâ. When according to Vedânta, the goal of man is the attainment of Mukti by breaking all the bondage of Mâyâ, what is the use of preaching things which keep the mind on mundane matters?” Without a moment’s hesitation the Swami replied, “Is not the idea of Mukti also in the domain of Mâyâ? Does not the Vedânta teach that the Atman is ever free? What is striving for Mukti to the Atman, then?”

With the nation at his feet, with name and fame and wealth heaped upon him, Swami Vivekananda was the same simple Sannyâsin as of old, untouched by pride and conceit. One day, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramlal Chattopadhyaya, or Ramlal Dada as he is endearingly called by the Brotherhood, came to see him. The Swami at once got up and

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offered Ramlal Dada his chair. Ramlal Dada out of humility and disconcerted at taking the Swami's chair in the presence of visitors, asked the Swami to resume his seat, but unsuccessfully. After much persuasion the Swami made him sit in the chair and strolled about the room saying to himself **गुरुवत् गुरुपुत्रेषु** "One should treat the relations of the Guru with the same honour as one would treat the Guru himself." This incident, though a simple one, was a lesson in Guru-bhakti to those who witnessed it.

In these days the Swami's moods varied according to the different temperaments of his visitors. On one occasion some one knowing his regard for "The Imitation of Christ" and its saintly author, referred to the wonderful humility which pervaded the teachings of that classical work, and observed that spiritual progress was impossible unless one thought of oneself as the lowest of the low. The Swami exclaimed, "Why should we think ourselves as low and reproach ourselves? Where is darkness for us! We are verily the sons of Light! We live and move and have our being in the Light which lighteth the whole universe!"

Once while discoursing on the conquest of lust, the Swami mentioned a personal instance which gives a hint as to what lengths he himself had gone rather than submit to the lower nature. "In the days of my youth," he said, "once I was so much troubled with a fit of passion that I became terribly vexed with myself, and in my rage sat upon a pot of burning charcoal that was near by. It took many days to heal the wound."

An enquirer one day asked the Swami about the difference between an Incarnation and a liberated soul. Without giving a direct answer to the question, he said, "My conclusion is that liberation is the highest stage. When I used to roam about



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all over India in my Sâdhanâ stage, I passed days and days in solitary caves in meditation, and many a time decided to starve myself to death, because I could not attain Mukti. Now I have no desire for Mukti. I do not care for it so long as one single individual in the universe remains without attaining it !”

These words of unbounded love for all beings remind one of a similar utterance of the Lord Buddha. But it must be remembered that both these great teachers of humanity spoke thus only after they had attained to illumination. Only Prophets and Saviours of mankind can challenge Mukti in that manner. Therein is the difference between an ordinary liberated soul and an Incarnation, or one who having Mukti in the palm of his hand, as it were, refuses to be merged in the Absolute or the essence of God Himself, but lives in the world for the good of others, to raise them to the highest state.

It was at the home of Sri Priya Nath Mukherjee that he said to the editor of *The Indian Mirror* that his preaching of Vedânta in the West had convinced him that all methods of raising the motherland such as politics, were but secondary to the necessity of clinging to her scriptures and obeying the injunctions thereof. After the distinguished visitor had left, the Swami had the following conversation with a preacher of the Cow Protection Society, which brings out in bold relief his love for his fellow-beings and his patriotism.

Swamiji: “What is the aim of your Association?”

Preacher: “We save our Gomâtâs (cows regarded as Mother) from the hands of the butchers by buying them; we have established refuges where old, diseased and disabled cows are taken care of.”

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Swamiji: "That is an excellent idea. What is the source of your income?"

Preacher: "The work is managed by gifts given by high-minded persons like you."

Swamiji: "What funds have you?"

Preacher: "The Marwaris are the chief supporters and patrons of the Society. They have helped it with large contributions of money."

Swamiji: "A terrible famine has been raging in Central India. The Government of India have published a report computing the death-rate from starvation at 900,000. Is your Society doing anything to save these starving people from the jaws of death?"

\*Preacher: "We do not help in famines and the like. Our object is to save the Gomâtâs only."

Swamiji: "When lakhs and lakhs of your own countrymen and co-religionists are succumbing to this dreadful famine, do you not think it your duty to help these miserable creatures, by giving them a morsel of food?"

Preacher: "No. This famine has broken out as a result of their Karma, their sins. It is a case of 'like Karma like fruit.'"

Hearing these words the Swami's face became flushed and his eyes glared at the speaker. But suppressing his emotions he exclaimed: "Sir, I have no sympathy with such organisations which do not feel for man, which seeing before their eyes thousands of their famished brothers perishing from starvation do not care to save them by offering even a morsel of food but spend millions for the protection of birds and beasts. I do not believe any public good, worth the name, can come out of such societies. 'Men are dying through their Karma, so let them die?' Are you not ashamed to make such a cruel statement? If you

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make the plea of the doctrine of Karma in that way, then there is no need of any endeavour to do good to others. It may be equally applied to your work,—the cows fall into the hands of the butchers and are slaughtered by them as a result of their own Karma in this or in some past lives, and so there is no need of our doing anything for them !”

The preacher feeling thoroughly discomfited said, “Of course what you say is true, but our Sâstras say, ‘The cow is our mother.’”

Amused at these words the Swami said, “Yes, that cow is our mother, I can very well understand. Otherwise who else will give birth to such talented sons.”

Perhaps this biting joke was lost upon this up-country preacher, for he without making any remark now asked the Swami for a contribution. He replied, “I am a Sannyâsin, as you see. If people give me money, I shall first of all spend it in the service of man. I shall try to save men first by making provision to give them food, education and religion. If after spending money on these things there be any left, I shall give something out of it to your Society.”

After the preacher had left the Swami said to those about him, “What nonsense that man talked ! ‘What is the use of helping those who are dying due to their own Karma !’ That is the reason why the country has gone to rack and ruin. Did you see to what a monstrous extreme your doctrine of Karma is dragged ! Alas, are they men who have no heart to feel for man !” As he spoke, his whole body shook with grief and disgust.

But one might go on endlessly quoting from these conversations and dialogues. They are an inspiration for Young India, surcharged as they are with unbounded love of country, fellow-men and religion.

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“Strength, strength is the one word,” he said in one of his Madras lectures, “that every line of the Upanishads declares unto me.” To make every Indian conscious of the infinite power of the Spirit lying potential in every man, he regarded as the foremost mission of his life, for out of it came everything that made religion dynamic, life-giving, and man-making. Talking one day to a disciple he said:

“It is rebellion against Nature, struggle for self-preservation, that differentiates Spirit from Matter. Where there is life, there is struggle, there is the manifestation of the Spirit. Read the history of all nations and you will find that that is the Law. It is only this nation which drifts with Nature and you are more dead than alive. You are in a hypnotised state. For the last thousand years or more, you are told that you are weak, you are nobodies, you are good for nothing and so on, and you have come to believe yourselves as such. This body of mine was also born and bred on Indian soil, but I have never for a moment allowed such baneful ideas to enter my mind. I had tremendous faith in myself. It is because of that, by the grace of the Lord, that those who look down upon us as weak and low, regard me as their teacher. If you have the same faith in yourselves as I had, if you can believe that in you is infinite power, unbounded wisdom, indomitable energy, if you can rouse that power in yourselves, you will be like me, you will do wonders. You will say, ‘Where is that strength in us to be able to think like that, and where are the teachers to tell us not of weakness but of strength and rouse in us that faith?’ It is to teach you that and to show you the way by my life that I have come to you. From me you must learn and realise that truth, and then go from town to town, from village to village, from door to door, and scatter the idea broadcast. Go and tell every Indian, ‘Arise, awake and dream no more! Rouse thyself and manifest the Divinity within!’ There is no want, there is no misery that you cannot remove by the consciousness of the power of the Spirit within. Believe in these words and you will be omnipotent.”

At their very first meeting the Swami had spoken to this disciple in Sanskrit, and taking him apart had addressed him with that memorable Sloka of the

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*Vivekachudâmani* of Sankarâchârya which runs thus :

“Fear not, O wise one, there is no death for thee. There is a way of crossing this ocean of Samsâra. That very path by which the self-controlled sages have reached to the other side of its shore, I shall point out to thee.”

At the Seal’s Garden and at the Alambazar Math learned Pandits came to test his knowledge of the Vedânta philosophy, to meet him on his own ground and test him if they could. An incident of this character took place at the Seal’s Garden. A group of Gujerati Pandits, well versed in the Vedas and the Darsanas, came to discuss the Sâstras with him. Thinking that the Swami, because of his absence in the West, had lost his fluency in Sanskrit, they spoke to him in that classic language. The Swami replied in a calm and dignified way to their excited arguments, speaking all the while the purest Sanskrit. Only once did he err, using the word “Asti” for “Svasti.” The Pandits laughed aloud making much of this trifling mistake. The Swami corrected himself at once, saying, “I am the servant of the Pandits. May they allow this mistake to be overlooked !”

The subjects of the discussion were numerous and varied, but the main topic was the respective position of the Purva and the Uttara Mimâmsa. The Swami supported the Uttara Mimâmsa, and with such power of logic and language that the Pandits themselves admitted the superiority of the Jnânakânda. As they left, they remarked to a group of the Swami’s admirers that though, perhaps, he had not a thorough mastery over Sanskrit grammar, he was undoubtedly a seer of the inmost spirit of the Sâstras over which he had an extraordinary command. “In discussion he is unique,” they said, “and the way in which he summarises his ideas and refutes those of his opponents

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is wonderful. Marvellous are his intellectual gifts."

When the Pandits had gone, the Swami referring to the incivility on the part of the Pandits, remarked that in the West such conduct would not be tolerated. "Civilised society in the West," he said, "takes the spirit of an argument and never seeks to pick holes in the language of an opponent, or put to one side the subject-matter in order to make fun over a grammatical mistake. Our Pandits lose sight of the spirit in quibbling over the letter of the Dharma. They fight over the husks and blinded by argumentation do not see the kernel of the corn."

What love the Gurubhais of the Swami bore to him! While the discussion was going on, Swami Ramakrishnananda was seen sitting apart in meditation posture, counting his beads. He was praying with his whole heart to the Lord, he said later on, so that the Swami might come out victorious in the discussion.

Another interesting occurrence of this time, was a visit from two gentlemen who came with a disciple of the Swami to ask him some questions on Prânâyâma, which had been aroused in their minds by reading "Râja Yoga." The Swami at once recognised one of them as a fellow-student of his, and made them sit by him. After replying to a few questions put by some of the other visitors, he began to speak on the subject of Prânâyâma without being asked. First of all he explained through modern science the origin of matter from mind, and by drawing contrasts between the laws of matter and of mind, showed the action and reaction of thought on form, and *vice versa*. He then went on to elucidate what Prânâyâma really was. From three o'clock in the afternoon until seven in the evening, the discourse continued. From what was heard from him that day, it seemed to all that only a very little part of his knowledge of Yoga had

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been given out in his book, that his was not mere book-learning, but proceeded from realisation. What astounded the visitors most, however, was that the Swami should have known that they had come to him to inquire about Prânâyâma, and solved their doubts in anticipation. Subsequently when a disciple asked about it the Swami replied, "Similar incidents have happened many times in the West, and people have often asked me how I could know the questions that were agitating their minds." The talk then drifted to thought-reading and the recollections of past births, and various other "Yoga powers." One of the party asked him outright, "Well, Swamiji, do you know your own past births?" Instantly he answered, "Yes, I do." But when they pressed him to draw aside the curtain and reveal the past, so that they might see who he was in other lives, he said, "*I can* know them,—I *do* know them,—but I prefer not to say anything on the point."

One evening he was seated with the Swami Premananda in a room, conversing in an ordinary way, when suddenly he became silent. After a while he said to his Gurubhai, "Did you see anything?," to which he received a negative answer. Then he said that he had just seen a ghost, with his head severed from the body, beseeching him with an agonising look to relieve him of his misery. On inquiry it was found that in that very garden-house, many years ago, a Brâhmana who was accustomed to lend money at high rates of interest, had had his throat cut by a debtor and his body thrown in the Ganges. There were several other occasions when the Swami was visited by similar apparitions; on such occasions he would raise his heart in prayer for their deliverance and send them his benediction.

It goes without saying that the main interest of the

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Swami's stay in Calcutta centred round the monastery which was then located at Alambazar near Dakshineswar. No words can describe the joy of the monks of Ramakrishna when 'their beloved Naren' was with them again. Memories of the olden days were revived. The days with the Master and the innumerable experiences of the wandering life of every one were recalled; and the Swami entertained his Gurubhais and the Bhaktas of the Lord with hundreds of tales and episodes of his life and work in 'the dim and distant West.' He freed them of many of their social inhibitions making them accept his European disciples in the Brotherhood, and gradually overcame their objections to association with the Westerners. The Swami had finally the satisfaction of seeing his Gurubhais entertaining his disciples from across the seas as their real brethren.

Of the Swami's numerous triumphs one of the greatest was the conversion of his Gurubhais from individualistic to the national idea of religious life in which public spirit and service to fellow-men occupied a prominent place. Up to this time the ideal of the monks of the Math was, to strive for personal Mukti and realisation of the Supreme Atman by severe penance and meditation, remaining as much as possible aloof from the world and its cares and sorrows, according to the prevailing Hindu idea, sanctified by tradition and sanctioned by the sages and seers from the Vedic period down to the present day.

But with the appearance of the Swami among them a new order of things was inaugurated. He railed at them—as he had done again and again in his epistles to them from the West—for their lack of faith in themselves and in the great mission of the Master, for their failure to organise themselves into an active body, and for their neglect in preaching the gospel of liberation



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to others. He appealed to their innate strength, calling them spiritual lions, every one capable of moving the world, if he but used his latent powers. The age demanded, he said, that they should carry the new light unto others, that they themselves should show by their example how to serve the poor, the helpless and the diseased, seeing God in them, and that they should inspire others to do the same. The mission of his life, he said, was to create a new order of Sannyâsins in India who would dedicate their lives to help and save others.

The proposition, though grand and inspiring, was to them too revolutionary and staggering. How could they suddenly change at another's bidding their precious religious ideal to which they had given their lives, for one which apparently went against their whole nature and training? With them the struggle was hard and long. But who could resist the Swami? He bore them down by the overwhelming power of his intellect and his keen insight into the significance of the teachings and the life and the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, no less than by his burning love for and passionate appeals to them. He interpreted his Master's message in a new light, showing them that their supreme duty lay in the carrying on of the Master's mission, the bringing about of a religious rejuvenation by raising the condition of the masses through service, and scattering broadcast the life-giving ideas of the Master over the entire world. The idea of personal liberation, he pointed out, was unworthy of those who believed themselves to be the favoured disciples of an Incarnation—for had not their Mukti been already assured by that very fact? They were now to arouse themselves and awaken others. That was, said the Swami, the mission entrusted to them by Sri Ramakrishna through him.

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Finally, however, out of their profound faith in their Leader his brother disciples bowed their heads in acquiescence, knowing his voice to be the voice of their Master; all girded up their loins, to do anything and to go anywhere, for the good of their fellow-beings at the bidding of the Swami.

As the first fruit of this singular self-abandonment, one whose whole life and soul had been indissolubly merged, as it were, in the ceremonial worship of the Master unremittingly for twelve years, who in his unparalleled devotion to that duty, had never left the precincts of the Math even for a single day,—Swami Ramakrishnananda—went to Madras at the behest of the Swami to open a centre there to propagate the teachings of the Vedânta in Southern India. Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda had already gone to the West at the call of the Swami to help him in the work there. And full of the same spirit Swami Akhandananda went to the Murshidabad District to start famine relief work for the people dying of starvation there. It may be said here to his credit, that this impulse to be of service to his fellow-men had seized him first among all the Gurubhais of the Swami as early as 1894 when he was in Khetri. He is seen then seeking approval for his intention to open schools to educate the masses. The other Gurubhais of the Swami were also ready to take up, as occasion demanded, any work of religious and philanthropic utility launched by him or to further his ideas and plans of work in India and abroad. Thus gradually came into existence the various monastic centres, Sevâshramas or Homes of Service, and the relief centres in times of plague, famine and flood under the charge and with the co-operation of his Gurubhais and his disciples.

After his arrival in Calcutta the increased strain

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caused by the multifarious demands and activities in the heat of the plains was too much for the Swami. Physicians advised him to take complete rest at once; but at this time he was very busy with plans for a monastery in the Himalayas, with the removal of the Math to a permanent healthy site on the bank of the Ganges, and with the founding of a religious and philanthropic organisation to be known as the Ramakrishna Mission, which would provide training for his own disciples and instruction for the hundreds of persons that came to him. Besides, his thoughts were with his two Gurubhais who were doing excellent work in America and England; from both these countries he was receiving numerous letters asking his advice and praying for his speedy return to the West, where 'still larger opportunities' were opening up for him.

Knowing it would be best to follow the advice of the doctors, the Swami relinquished his work in Calcutta and visits to other parts of India for the time being, and went on to Darjeeling whither Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had preceded him. He was joined by Swamis Brahmananda, Trigunatita and Jnanananda, by Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh, Mr. Goodwin, Dr. Turnbull and Messrs. Alasingha Perumal, G. G. Narasimhacharya and Singaravelu Mudaliar. The three last named were his devoted Madras disciples of the olden days, who had come with him and his party from Madras to Calcutta and were living with him at the Math. In Darjeeling all became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Bannerjee. Through the generosity of the Maharaja of Burdwan, who revered the Swami greatly, a portion of his residence known as "Rose Bank" was placed at the Swami's disposal for some time.

The Swami now gave himself up to complete rest,

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walking about on the mountain paths, visiting a Buddhist monastery in the neighbourhood, rejoicing in the glorious associations of the Himalayas, conversing with his friends, or in hours of silent meditation.

While the Swami was the guest at the residence of Mr. M. N. Bannerjee, two incidents occurred which give one a glimpse of his Yoga powers. There was then living with the family, Mr. Motilal Mukherjee, who later became Swami Sachchidânanda. At this time he was suffering from high fever with delirium. The Swami out of sympathy just touched his head; the fever subsided at once, and the patient became normal. The same person was a Bhakta of the emotional type, and often in the course of Sankirtana fell into emotional states in which he would cry and groan and roll on the ground beating his hands and feet against it. The Swami touched him over the heart one day. Thenceforward the whole religious temperament of the man was changed and he became an Advaitin devoting himself to the study and practice of Jnâna Yoga! Needless to say, he was no longer subject to trances.

With the exception of a flying visit to Calcutta to receive the Raja of Khetri, who had come all the way from Rajputana to see him after his return from the West, the Swami was free from work and worry. On the occasion of the Raja's visit, the Prince was sumptuously entertained in the monastery at Alambazar, and the Swami held a long discourse with him pertaining to the mission of Hinduism. Raja Ajit Singh and several other ruling princes intended to start shortly for England. The former tried hard to induce the Swami to go with them, but the doctors would not hear of his undertaking any physical or mental labour just then.

Speaking generally, the Swami's health was very

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bad, though at times he felt some of his old vigour and strength. He was cautioned not to exert himself even to the extent of reading, and above all, not to indulge in any deep or serious thought. But to him to be idle was worse than death.

After a time he returned to Calcutta for two weeks in order to supervise and settle certain important matters before leaving for Almora for his health.

The Swami was far happier at the monastery where he could enjoy the freedom of the monk among his beloved Gurubhais and his devoted disciples than anywhere else. At this time several educated young men joined the Math, as a result of their listening to the inspiring words of the Swami concerning Vairâgyam. He trained them for future work by constant instruction, and holding classes at the Math on the Bhagavad-Gita and the Vedânta. Even during the years of his absence from the Brotherhood, four young men had joined the Math and were leading the life of Brahmacharya. They were anxious to be initiated into Sannyâsa by the Swami himself. For several years they had lived under the supervision of the elder members of the monastery; and the Swami, knowing that they were worthy, consented to make them his own disciples. The elder members raised serious objections with respect to one of the four because of his past life. This roused the Swami to the reply, "What is this! If we shrink from sinners, who else will save them? Besides, the very fact that one has taken refuge in the Math in his desire to lead a better life, shows that his intentions are good and we must help him. And even if one is bad and perverted, and you cannot change his character, why then, have you taken the Gerua cloth?—why have you assumed the rôle of teachers?" The Brahmachârins who were initiated into Sannyâsa,

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became known respectively as Swamis Virajânanda, Nirbhayânanda, Prakâshânanda and Nityânanda. Of these the first-named had joined the Math in 1891, the next two much later and the last, who was much older even than the Swami, had just done so. The initiation ceremony was very impressive and delighted the Swami more than the huge ovations in his honour.

On the day previous to the initiation ceremony, the Swami spoke of nothing but the glories of renunciation, his eyes emitting fire, as it were, and his words of power infusing strength into the aspirants. The discourse, owing to its length cannot be given here. The Swami concluded: "Remember, for the salvation of one's own soul and for the good and happiness of the many, the Sannyâsin is born in the world. To sacrifice his own life for others, to alleviate the misery of millions rending the air with their cries, to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow, to console the heart of the bereaved mother, to provide the ignorant and the depressed masses with the ways and means for the struggle for existence and make them stand on their own feet, to preach broadcast the teachings of the Sâstras to one and all without distinction, for their material and spiritual welfare, to rouse the sleeping lion of Brahman in the hearts of all beings by the diffusion of the light of Knowledge,—the Sannyâsin is born in the world!" And turning to his Gurubhais he exclaimed: "Remember, it is for the consummation of this purpose in life that we have taken birth and we shall lay down our lives for it. Arise, awake, and arouse and awaken others, fulfil your mission in life and you will reach the highest Goal!"

"You must renounce everything," he continued, you must not seek pleasure or comfort for yourself.

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All attachment will have to be cut and cast aside. You must look upon lust and gold as poison, name and fame as the vilest filth, glory as a terrible hell, pride of birth or position as sinful as drinking wine. Being the teacher of your fellow-men and devoted to the Self within, you will have to live to attain freedom and for the good of the world. Can you strive with your whole soul to do these things? Take this path only after serious reflection. There is yet time to return to the old life. Are you ready to obey my orders implicitly? If I ask you to face a tiger or a venomous snake, if I ask you to jump into the Ganges and catch a crocodile, or if I want to sell you to work the rest of your life in a tea-garden in Assam as coolies, or if I order you to starve yourselves to death or burn yourselves in a slow fire, thinking it will be for your good, are you ready to obey me instantly?" The four Brahmachârins implied their assent by bowing their heads in silence. He then duly initiated them into Sannyâs.

Another initiation ceremony took place at the Alambazar Math about this time, when Mantras were given to Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, a lay disciple, and to a Brahmachâri (later known as Swami Suddhânanda) who had recently joined the Math after hearing the Swami speak on renunciation. To Sarat he said, "Arouse Sradhâ in yourself and in your countrymen! Like Nachiketa go to Yama's door if necessary to know the Truth, for the salvation of your soul, for the solution of the mystery of life and death! If going into the jaws of death helps you to gain the Truth, you have to do that fearlessly. All fear is death; you have to go beyond it. Be fearless, be ready, from today, to lay down your life for your own Moksha and for the good of others. Otherwise what

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is the use of bearing this burden of flesh and bones? Being initiated into the fiery Mantra of absolute renunciation for the sake of the Lord, give away your body for the good of the world, as did the Sage Dadhichi when the Devas came and told him that the demon Vritra could not be killed with any other weapon but by a thunderbolt made out of his bones !”

Whenever the Swami came to Calcutta for a brief sojourn, he stayed at Balaram Babu’s house in Bagh-bazar, where he and the monastic members of the Order always found a ready welcome and warm hospitality. On such occasions it was the scene of the gathering of Bhaktas and visitors from all parts of the city.

It was in the afternoon of May 1, 1897, that a representative gathering of all the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna took place at Balaram Babu’s house, in response to the Swami’s intimation of his desire to hold a meeting for the purpose of founding an Association. He had long thought of bringing about a co-operation between the monastic and the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and of organising in a systematic way the hitherto unsystematic activities, both spiritual and philanthropic, of his Gurubhais. When all had assembled, the Swami opened the meeting by speaking in Bengali to the following effect:

“From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organisation nothing great and permanent can be done. But in a country like India, at our present stage of development, it does not seem to me well-advised to start an organisation on a democratic basis in which every member has an equal voice, and decisions are arrived at by a majority of the votes of the community. With the West the case is different. . . . Amongst us also, when with



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the spread of education we shall learn to sacrifice, to stand above our individual interests and concerns, for the good of the community or the nation at large, then it would be possible to work on a democratic basis. Taking this into consideration, we should have for our organisation at present a Dictator whose orders everyone should obey. Then, in the fulness of time, it will be guided by the opinion and consent of the members.

“This Association will bear the name of him in whose name we have become Sannyâsins, taking whom as your ideal you are leading the life of the householders in the field of activity of this Samsâra, and whose holy name and the influence of whose unique life and teachings have, within twelve years of his passing away, spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and the West. Let this Sangha, or organisation, be therefore named the Ramakrishna Mission. We are only the servants of the Master. May you all help us in this work.”

The proposal being enthusiastically supported by all the householder disciples, the future method of work was discussed and some resolutions were passed, laying down the main principles and the aims and objects by which the movement was to be guided. As originally drawn up they were to the following effect:

This Association (Sangha) shall be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.

The aim of the Sangha is to preach those truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement.

The duty of the Mission is to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

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*Its Methods of Action are :*

(a) To train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses;

(b) to promote and encourage arts and industries; and

(c) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedântic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

*Indian Work Department :*

The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Ashramas in different parts of India for the training of Sannyâsins and such of the householders as may be willing to devote their lives to educate others, and to the finding of the means by which they would be enabled to educate the people, by going about from one province to another.

Its work in the *Foreign Department* should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of Vedânta in order to bring about a closer relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.

The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.

Anyone who believes in the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, or who sympathises or is willing to co-operate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership.

After the resolutions were passed, office-bearers were appointed. The Swami himself became the General President and made Swami Brahmananda and Swami Yogananda, the President and the

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Vice-President, respectively, of the Calcutta centre. It was decided that meetings would be held at Balaram Babu's house every Sunday afternoon, when recitations and readings from the Gita, the Upanishads and other Vedânta scriptures with comments and annotations would be given, and papers read and lectures delivered, the subjects being chosen by the President. All these were decided in the two preliminary meetings of the first and the fifth of May, and the first general meeting of the members was held on the ninth under the presidency of Swami Brahmananda. For three years the Ramakrishna Mission held its sittings at the same place; whenever the Swami was in Calcutta he was present and spoke and sang.

For some time the philanthropic and missionary work was carried on through the medium of this Association. In 1899, however, the Swami started a Math or monastery at Belur, and made over its management to a number of Trustees by a Deed of Trust in 1901, the main objects of the Math being the training of a band of monks for self-realisation and for the acquisition of a capacity to serve the world in all possible ways. Soon after this Math was established as the central seat of the monastic order, the Ramakrishna Mission Association ceased to function as an independent organisation, and the Math authorities themselves carried on the philanthropic and charitable work originally undertaken by the Mission Association.

In course of time, with the growth of its scope and public responsibilities it was felt that for the efficient carrying on of the philanthropic, charitable and missionary work, as well as for giving it a legal status it was better to have a separate organisation known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Accordingly in

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the year 1909 a Society under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission was registered under Act XXI of 1860. The exigencies of the Law required certain changes to be made in the rules and regulations of this Mission Association as originally drawn under the guidance of the Swami in 1897. Most of these changes, however, were of an executive nature, the principles and objects as originally laid down by the Swami remaining the same. The management of the Ramakrishna Mission was henceforth vested in a Governing Body consisting of the Trustees of the Belur Math for the time being. The registration of the Mission was undertaken to keep the Math activities, viz., the training and maintenance of a band of Sannyâsins to carry on religious work, distinct from the Mission activities.

The activities of the Belur Math extended, and in course of time various branch Maths sprang up in different parts of the country. These branch Maths and the Math at Belur were from their very inception treated as part of a single organisation. Side by side with the springing into existence of the branch Maths, the Ramakrishna Mission extended its sphere of activities, and the various philanthropic and charitable institutions that had already been started by it in different parts of India were gradually incorporated into the registered Society known as the Ramakrishna Mission, and new centres also began to be started.

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math with their respective centres are distinct institutions, there has been a close association between the two bodies as the Governing Body of the Mission is identical with the Trustees of the Math, and the principal workers of the Mission are members of the Ramakrishna Math, and both have their headquarters at Belur Math. But the Math and the Mission being

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independent of each other in their respective spheres of activities, own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them.

Turning now from the proceedings of the inauguration meeting of a semi-public nature, one finds the Swami in the inner circle of his Gurubhais and disciples, talking about his ideas and intentions in starting this momentous movement. A Gurubhai having protested that the Swami's ways of preaching, such as lecturing and holding meetings, and his ideas of doing works of public utility, were rather Western in type and conception and incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, the Swami was roused to an apostolic mood and delivered himself thus with great fervour :

"How do you know that these are not in keeping with his ideas?" Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits? I shall break these limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the world. He never enjoined me to introduce his worship and the like. The methods of spiritual practice, concentration and meditation and other high ideals of religion that he taught,—those we must realise and teach mankind. Infinite are the ideas and infinite are the paths that lead to the Goal. I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already. Blessed are we that we have found refuge at the feet of our Master, and it is our bounden duty to give the ideas entrusted to us freely to the whole world."

The Gurubhai raising no dissentient voice to these words, the Swami continued :

"Time and again have I received in this life marks of his grace. He himself is at my back and is making me do all these things in these ways. When I used to lie under a tree, exhausted, smitten with hunger, when I had not a strip of cloth even wherewith to tie my Kaupina, when I was determined to travel round the world penniless,—even then, through his grace I received help and succour in every way! Then again, when crowds jostled with one another in the streets of Chicago to have a sight of this Vivekananda,

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I have been able, through his blessings, to digest without difficulty all that honour, a hundredth part of which would have made any man go off his head! By the will of the Lord, victory has been mine everywhere. Now I intend to do something for this country. Do you all give up doubts and misgivings and help me in my work, and you will see how, by his grace wonders will be accomplished."

The Gurubhai said:

"Whatever you wish shall be done. We are always ready to follow your leading. I clearly see that the Master is working through you. Still, I confess, doubts do sometimes arise in the mind, for, as we saw it, his method of doing things was so different, and I am led to question myself if we are not straying from the path laid down by him."

The Swami then said:

"The thing is this. Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. Even if one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot measure the unfathomable depths of our Master's mind! One gracious glance of his eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant! If he chooses now instead to work through me, making me his instrument, I can only bow to his will."

Indeed, it was the Swami among all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who saw in the Master not a mere person but a principle, not only the apostle of realisation and renunciation, but also of service to humanity in the spirit of worship. Did not Sri Ramakrishna fling away the bliss of Brahman to be of service to mankind? Did he not treat all beings as Nârâyanas (divinities) every moment of his life? Who among his disciples has not seen his unhappiness at the sight of poverty and misery, and his touching solicitation for their relief? Who could ever feel like him, his whole body and soul wrenched, as it were, at the distress and destitution of his fellow-men and at the sight of oppression to men and animals? True, this phase of his unique character was considerably over-

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shadowed by the grandeur of his illuminated personality ever merging in the superconscious state and breaking forth into utterances of wonderful power and charm exhorting all to seek the Highest. It was left to his greatest disciple to interpret his Master's life and teachings from all angles. It was the genius of Swami Vivekananda to bring out and emphasise this human side of his Master's nature and to clear away the misconception which prevailed in the minds of many, that Renunciation and Service were conflicting ideas which could not be combined without detriment to the one or the other. And it was to his glory that he concretised and gave shape to those divine impulses through the institution started under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission for practising and preaching the Dharma in its universal aspect, Renunciation and Service, according to him, being the twofold National Ideal of Modern India.

Another afternoon, some time later, when the Swami was living at Balaram Babu's house, he was talking in a light mood with some of his Gurubhais, and lay disciples of the Master. At these moments he would be very gay, making all sorts of jokes, willing to take as well as give in the battle of wits. One of the Swami's Gurubhais was taking him to task for not preaching the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and challenging him to prove how his plans could be reconciled with their Master's teachings. For Sri Ramakrishna insisted, above all, on Bhakti and on the practice of Sâdhanâs for the realisation of God, while the Swami constantly urged them to go about working, preaching, and serving the poor and the diseased,—the very things which forced the mind outward, which was the greatest impediment to the life of Sâdhanâ. Then again, the Swami's ideas of start-

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ing Maths and Homes of Service for the public good, his ideas of organisation and of patriotism which were undoubtedly Western in conception, his efforts to create a new type of Sannyâsin with a broader ideal of renunciation, and others of a similar nature were incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of renunciation and would surely have been repudiated by him. The Swami took these observations of his Gurubhai at first lightly and retorted in a jocular way, saying, "What do you know? You are an ignorant man. You are a fit Chelâ of Sri Ramakrishna! 'Like Guru like Chelâ! Your study ended, with 'Ka,' the first letter of the alphabet, like Prahlâd, who being reminded by this letter of Krishna, could not proceed further. You are Bhaktas, or in other words, sentimental fools! What do you understand of religion? You are babies. You are only good at praying with folded hands: 'O Lord! how beautiful is Your nose, how sweet are Your eyes,' and all such nonsense,—and you think your salvation is secured, that Sri Ramakrishna will come at the final hour and take you up by the hand to the highest heaven! Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Mâyâ, because Sri Ramakrishna did not do them himself! Because he said to someone, 'Seek and find God first; doing good to the world is a presumption!' As if God-realisation is such an easy thing to be achieved! As if He is such a fool as to make Himself a plaything in the hands of the imbecile!"

Growing more and more serious he thundered on:

"You think you understand Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think Jnâna is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him



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which is mighty little. Hands off! Who cares for your Ramakrishna? Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas, and make them stand on their own feet and be Men, inspired with the spirit of Karma Yoga. I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or anyone, I am a follower of him only who carries out my plans! I am not a servant of Ramakrishna or anyone, but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own Mukti."

His voice became choked, his whole frame shook with intense emotion. He could not contain himself any longer. Tears streamed from his eyes. Like a flash of lightning he was up on his feet and ran from the room to his sleeping apartment. His Gurubhais were seized with fear and repented of their criticisms spoken to him in that strain. A few of them followed the Swami, some minutes later, to his room. Entering with cautious steps, they found him sitting in meditation posture, his whole frame stiff, tears flowing from his half-closed eyes, the hairs of his body standing on end. He was absorbed in, what seemed to them, Bhâva-Samâdhi! Nearly an hour; the Swami got up, washed his face and came out to his waiting friends in the sitting-room. The atmosphere was too tense for words. Finally the Swami broke the silence thus:

"When one attains Bhakti one's heart and nerves become so soft and delicate that they cannot bear even the touch of a flower! Do you know that I cannot even read a novel nowadays! I cannot think or talk of Sri Ramakrishna long, without being overwhelmed. So I am trying and trying always to keep down the rush of Bhakti welling within me. I am trying to bind and bind myself with the iron chains of Jnâna, for still my work to my motherland is unfinished, and my message to the world not yet fully delivered. So, as soon as I find that Bhakti feelings are trying to come up to sweep me off my feet, I give a hard knock to them and make myself adamant by bringing up austere Jnâna. Oh, I have work to do! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be

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done by me and will not give me rest till I have finished it! And, oh, how shall I speak of him! Oh, his love for me!"

Swami Yogananda and others fearing a repetition of the above experience gently interrupted him by asking if he would not like to have an evening stroll on the roof of the house as it was too warm in the room. Then they took him up there and diverted his thoughts by small talk, till it was far into the night and he was his normal self again.

This incident is very significant, exposing as it does the depths of the Swami's inner nature, namely, that of Bhakti, and also as it gives an idea of the tremendous cost at which his Jnâna and his spirit of service to others had been acquired. The monks of the Order ever sought to divert his attention from such tempestuous outbursts, for that would bring him closer to his real nature, when they knew he would tear off all mortal bonds and soar, through Mahâsamâdhi, into the region of the Supreme Consciousness of Brahman. Reflecting on such moments in the Swami's life, one of the greatest of his Sannyâsin Gurubhais has said, "You see, the Master has brought us all into this world to keep his (the Swami's) mind diverted to external matters and to his various plans of work, so that he may live long enough to fulfil our Master's mission. Otherwise he may fly off at any time to the sphere of Nirvikalpa Samâdhi."

So profound and convincing was the impression created, that never more was any protest made against his plans and methods of work. It was like the clearing of the atmosphere, which had been overhung with clouds of doubt, now and again breaking forth into storms of conflict of ideals. Everyone realised as never before that the Master was at the back of Vivekananda working through him.

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Unfortunately the Swami's health was causing him trouble. He was counselled by his physicians and urged by his Gurubhais to start as soon as possible for the dry and cool climate of Almora whither Miss Muller, who had joined him in Calcutta from England, and Mr. Goodwin had already preceded him. He had received repeated invitations from the residents of that hill-station to visit them. Accordingly he left Calcutta on May 6, in the company of some of his Gurubhais and disciples.

The Swami met with a most cordial welcome at Lucknow where he remained one night on his way to Almora. At Kathgodam he was met by several of his Almora admirers and Mr. Goodwin who had come down to receive him. At Lodea, close to Almora, there was a huge crowd of citizens waiting, in the afternoon, to convey him along the final part of his journey, and at their request the Swami mounted a horse dressed in handsome trappings and headed a procession into the town. It seemed that, as the Bazar was reached, every citizen of the place had joined the company. Thousands of Hindu ladies from the tops of houses and from windows, showered flowers and rice on the Swami, as he passed along. In the centre of the town, a section of the Bazar street had been turned into a pandal capable of holding three thousand people. Pandit Jwala Dutt Joshi read first a Hindi address of welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee. Pandit Hari Ram Pande followed with a second address from the Swami's host,

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Lala Badri Sah Thulgharia, and a Pandit read an equally appreciative address in Sanskrit.

The Swami made a brief reply, in which he touched feelingly upon the spiritualising influence that the blessed Himalayas had exerted on Indian thought, and how he himself had longed from his very youth to pass his days in their midst. Though he knew that he would never be able to do so in the way he had planned, still he prayed that "that silence and unknownness of the ancient Rishis," would be given to him, so that he might pass the last part of his life in peace and meditation there. He said that at the very sight of those mountains, all the propensities to work, that ferment that had been going on in his brain for years, seemed to quiet down, and his mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas stand for—Renunciation!

Again the Swami was busy. Whole days passed in holding religious discourse with numerous visitors. In spite of his not getting rest, his health improved gradually.

Amongst those who accompanied the Swami to Almora or met him there or who accompanied him later in his journeys through Northern India, were Swamis Yogananda, Niranjanananda, Adbhutananda, Achyutananda, Vijnanananda, Sadananda, old Sachchidananda, Suddhananda, Brahmachâri Krishnalâl, and Mr. J. J. Goodwin. With these the Swami passed many an hour of fun as well as of religious instruction.

But the Swami was not to be left in peace. Since his landing on Indian soil with unprecedented ovations and homage from the nation as a whole, a persistent campaign of misrepresentation of his work and influence and baseless attacks on his character were being made, chiefly by certain

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interested American Missions in India and in the United States, in their endeavour to thwart his work during his absence, and to check the ever-increasing tide of religious revival which his triumphal progress through Southern India had aroused. False and base reports communicated to American papers about the Swami's success and his propaganda, calculated to discredit him, found wide publicity and were made capital of in the United States, giving rise to fierce criticism. Though heaps of these newspaper cuttings reached him, the Swami, not in the least daunted, treated them with utter indifference. It is needless to speak of them in detail, as the Swami's own words written in private letters and those of his American friends and disciples who stood up in his defence are amply explanatory. It is a pity that a distinguished Christian Divine like Dr. Barrows, who came out to India on a lecture tour shortly before the Swami's return from the West, made no secret of his feelings of jealousy and distrust while he was in this country and after his return home. As early as January 30, 1897, the Swami had written to a friend in Chicago:

"I had written a letter to my people from London to receive Dr. Barrows kindly. They accorded him a big reception, but it was not my fault that he could not make any impression in Calcutta. . . . Now Dr. Barrows thinks a world of me, I hear. Such is the world!"

The very evening of his landing in California on May 10, Dr. Barrows was reported to have made remarks in an interview with the representative of the "Chronicle," which according to the paper, "would make that Indian personage's ears tingle if he could hear them." Here are some excerpts:

"The Swami arrived in Madras one week ahead of me, but he did not call upon me to renew our acquaintanceship.

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Instead, he hurriedly left Madras the day after I arrived. All that the "Chronicle" credited him with saying about the women of America is true, and knowing that he had been telling lies he avoided me. There is one thing I want to correct however. The Swami has not lost caste through his conduct. It transpires that he never was a Brahmin. He belongs to the Sudra caste, the lowest of the respectable caste in India. All that he has said about American women and American institutions disgusted some of the Hindus I met. They came to me and declared that he did not represent or preach their faith.

"What I particularly object to in Vivekananda is his ridiculous and exaggerated statement about the influence of Hindu speakers in England and America. He is a man of brilliant and pleasant qualities, but he seems to have lost his head. I could never tell whether to take him seriously or not. He struck me as being a Hindu Mark Twain.

"He is a man of genius and has some following, though only temporary."

The Swami says that in no speech, in no interview, and in no conversation had a single word fallen from him derogatory to American women. On the contrary he lost no opportunity of speaking of their generosity and kindness and of their sincerity in the search for truth. The other charge is equally untrue. When asked about his mission, the Swami repeatedly avoided answering at all, and when pressed to talk on the subject, spoke with a modesty which would well become some of those who appear to be seeking notoriety at his expense.

Mrs. Sara C. Bull writing in defence of the Swami to Dr. Lewis G. Janes on June 7, says:

"Thank you for the California clipping. Since Dr. Barrows so unqualifiedly denounces Vivekananda as a liar and for that reason charges him with intent to avoid him at Madras, I regret, for his own good, that Dr. Barrows should have omitted all mention of the Swami Vivekananda's widely circulated letters of welcome urging upon the Hindus, whatever their views of Dr. Barrows' message concerning their and his own religion might be, to offer a hospitality of thought and greeting worthy of the kindness extended to the Eastern dele-

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gates at Chicago by Dr. Barrows and Mr. Bonney. Those letters circulated at the time when the Indian nation was preparing a welcome unprecedented for warmth and enthusiasm to the monk, contrast markedly with Dr. Barrows' recent utterances in California, on his own home-coming, concerning Vivekananda, and bring the two men before the Indian public for their judgment. . . .

"It may be added in this connection, that Vivekananda was wearied to the extreme and was threatened with a breakdown in health from the first to the last of his public receptions on Indian soil, and, finally, by command of his physician obliged to forgo more fatigue and take absolute rest for some months' time. Vivekananda having been my guest, attacks concerning him are sent to me, and I know that for two years previous to his return to India the Swami was quoted both here and there as having denounced American women at different points in India, showing that he has a double or that his opponents pass on, as does Dr. Barrows, sentiments deemed for his utterance, omitting the sum and substance of what he has uttered again and again. The dry humour of American pleasantries not infrequently used by gentlemen, but unsafe for my foreigner, occasionally tempt the monk with his rare facility in the use of English, to a misplaced and out-of-taste quotation, while it is also true that his habitual self-control is under strong provocation sometimes lost; but a fair opponent he is and, I can testify, to even unfair and untruthful detractors. With the power held in common with great preachers and artists to draw to himself emotional men and women, it is to his credit that he may sometimes use harsh characterisation rather than permit a blind following to himself.

"The homes open to the Swami Vivekananda in the United States would honour any man. His friends will agree with Dr. Barrows that he has genius, not for geniality alone, but for intellectual power and the modesty of the true scholar, that will guard him from egotism and vanity. He deals as few can with agnosticism and atheism, and gives earnest students a philosophical analysis that establishes Religion, embracing the sectarian religions, and in spirituality he has the childlikeness of spirit that will make him the loving servant of his people.

"It is always painful to encounter workers rightly devoted to sectarian interests and service, indulging in the present rule of habitual asperities and quick distrust rather than looking for points of contact. I send you quotations from the Swami's

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letters to India and here, giving in reply Vivekananda's sober opinions to the points of attack as made by Dr. Clark, Dr. Barrows and others. Pray use them or my own estimate as you deem fit.

“ P. S. The allusion to Vivekananda's exaggerated statement of his Western work and Mission is as mistaken as Dr. Barrows' suggestion that he has only a temporary influence. Vivekananda returns *not Europeanised*, and the urgent calls to be filled as soon as his health permits are evidence of this. I believe him as one to welcome all true religious workers there.

“ The German schools, the English Orientalists and our own Emerson testify to the fact that it is literally true that Vedântic thought pervades the Western thought of today, and it is in this sense only that Vivekananda could mean that thousands in the West are Vedântists,—a philosophy able to include sectarians.”

The following quotations from the Swami's letters written during these times to intimate disciples in America, referring to the above controversy and certain others from rival bodies in India, furnish the key to his position and to his conduct. Writing on February 25, he says:

“ I have not a moment to die, as they say. What with processions and tom-tomings and various other methods of reception all over the country I am *nearly dead*. . . . On the other hand, the country is full of persons jealous and pitiless who would leave no stone unturned to pull my work to pieces.

“ But as you know well, the more the opposition the more is the demon in me roused.”

Remarking on the cause of the failure of Dr. Barrows' mission in India he writes in his letter of April 28, 1897:

“ Dr. Barrows has reached America by this time, I hope. Poor man! He came here to preach the most bigoted Christianity, with the usual result that nobody listened to him. Of course they received him very kindly, but it was my letter that did that. I could not put brains into him! Moreover, he seems to be a queer sort of man. I hear that he was angry at the national rejoicings over my home-coming. You ought



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to have sent a brainier man anyway, for the Parliament of Religions has been made a farce of to the Hindu mind by Dr. Barrows. On metaphysical lines no nation on earth can hold a candle to the Hindu,—and curiously all those that come over here from Christian lands to preach, have that one antiquated foolishness of an argument that the Christians are powerful and rich and the Hindus are not, ergo Christianity is better than Hinduism, to which the Hindu very aptly retorts, that that is the very reason why Hinduism is a religion and Christianity is not; because, in this beastly world, it is blackguardism and that alone that *prosper*; virtue always suffers. It seems, however advanced the Western nations are in scientific culture, they are mere babies in metaphysical and spiritual education. Material science can only give worldly prosperity, whilst spiritual science is for eternal life. If there be no eternal life, still the enjoyment of spiritual thoughts as ideals is keener and makes a man happier, whilst the foolery of materialism leads to competition and undue ambition and ultimate death, individual and national.

“ . . . Do you know Dr. Colston Turnbull of Chicago? He came here, a few weeks before I reached India. He seems to have had a great liking for me, with the result that Hindu people all liked him very much.”

“ . . . I am going to grow a big beard, now that my hair is turning grey. It gives a venerable appearance and saves one from American scandalmongers. O thou white hairs, how much thou canst conceal! All glory unto thee, Hallelujah!”

Justifying his plain-speaking on certain occasions in India, which gave offence to the parties concerned, he writes to a friend on May 5:

“ About the——s, and the——s, you must remember first that in India, they are nonentities. They may publish a few papers and make a lot of splash and try to catch Occidental ears, but I do not know if there are two dozen——s of Hindu birth and two hundred ——s in the whole of India. I was one man in America and another here. Here the whole nation is looking upon me as their authority,—there I was a much-reviled preacher. Here princes draw my carriage,—there I would not be admitted to a decent hotel! My utterances here, therefore, must be for the good of the race, my people,—however unpleasant they might appear to a friend's acceptance. Love and toleration for everything sincere and honest—but

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never for hypocrisy! The —s tried to fawn and flatter me, as I was 'the authority' in India. Therefore it was all the more necessary for me to stop my work from lending any sanction to their hypocrisies, by a few bold decisive words, and the thing was done. I am very glad of it. . . . Let me again tell you that India is already Ramakrishna's and for a *purified* Hinduism, whether I live a few years more or not."

On June 3, he writes from Almora in a mood of Vairâgyam:

"As for myself I am quite content. I have roused a good many of our people and that was all I wanted. Let things have their course and Karma its sway. I have no bonds here below. I have seen life and it is all self,—life is for self, love for self, honour for self, everything for self. I look back and scarcely find any action that I have done for self,—even my wicked deeds were not for self. So I am content. Not that I feel I have done anything specially good or great, but the world is so little, life so mean a thing, existence so, so servile,—that I wonder and smile that human beings, rational souls, should be running after the self—so mean and detestable a prize!

"This is the truth: We are caught in a trap and the sooner one gets out the better for one. I have seen the truth, let the body float up or down, who cares!

"I was born for the life of the scholar—retired, quiet, poring over my books. But the Mother dispenses otherwise. Yet the tendency is there."

And on July 9, he is seen writing the following letter to an intimate friend in America who grew nervous and uneasy at the repeated attacks made against him in the newspapers, being afraid that these might injure his cause there. The letter shows the Swami in his combative spirit, his righteous indignation roused under extreme provocation to express himself in a masterpiece of self-defence and passionate monasticism:

". . . I had also a lot of cuttings from different American papers fearfully criticising my utterances about American women and furnishing me with the strange news that I had been outcasted! As if I had any caste to lose, being a Saṅnyâsin!!

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“Not only no caste has been lost, but it has considerably shattered the opposition to sea-voyage, my going to the West. If I should have to be outcasted, I would have to be done so with half the ruling princes of India and almost all of educated India. On the other hand, the leading Raja of the caste to which I belonged before my entering the Order publicly got up a banquet in my honour, at which were most of the *big bugs* of that caste. The Sannyâsins, on the other hand, *may not* dine with anyone in India as beneath the dignity of Gods to dine with mere mortals, as they are Nârâyanas, while the others are mere men. And dear M.—, these feet have been washed and wiped and worshipped by the descendants of a hundred kings and there has been a *progress* through the country which none ever commanded in India.

“It will suffice to say that the police were necessary to keep order if I ventured out into the streets! That is outcasting indeed!! Of course, that took the starch out of the Missoos, and who are they here?—Nobodies. We are in blissful ignorance of their existence all the time. I had in a lecture said something about the Missoos and the origin of that species, except the English Churchmen, and in that connection I had to refer to the very churchy women of America and their power of inventing scandals. This the Missoos are parading as an attack on American women *en masse* to undo my work there, as they well know that anything said against themselves will rather please the U. S. public. My dear M.—, supposing I had said all sorts of fearful things against the ‘Yanks,’ would that be paying off a millionth part of what they say of our *mothers and sisters*? ‘Neptune’s waters’ would be perfectly useless to wash off the hatred the Christian ‘Yanks’ of both sexes bear to us, ‘heathens of India,’—and what harm have we done them? Let the ‘Yanks’ learn to be patient under criticism and then criticise others. It is a well-known psychological fact that those who are ever ready to abuse others cannot bear the slightest touch of criticism themselves. Then again, what do I owe them? Except your family, Mrs. B.—, the Leggets and a few other kind persons, who else has been kind to me? Who came forward to help me work out my ideas? I had to work till I am at death’s door and *had to spend nearly the whole of my best energies in America*, so that they might learn to be broader and more spiritual! In England I worked only six months. There was not a breath of scandal save one, and that was the working of an American woman, which greatly relieved my English friends—not only no attacks, but

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many of the best English Church clergymen became my firm friends, and without asking, I got much help for my work and I am sure to get much more. There is a society watching my work and getting help for it, and four highly respected persons followed me to India to help my work, braving everything and dozens were ready, and the next time I go, hundreds will be!

"Dear, dear M——, do not be afraid for me. . . . The world is big, very big, and there must be some place for me, even if the 'Yankees rage.' Anyhow, I am quite satisfied with my work. I never planned anything. I have taken things as they came. Only one idea was burning in my brain,—to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery, nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken Pariah and feeding the starving Chandāla, and the Lord sends help to me, and to them all. 'What are men?' He is with me, the Beloved, as He was when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about, unknown, from place to place in India. What do I care about what they talk,—the babies,—they do not know any better. What! I, who have realised the Spirit and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle! Do I look like that?

"I had to talk a lot about myself because I owed that to you. I feel my task is done—at best, three or four years more of life is left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing for certain that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next. And may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship.

" 'He Who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols!'

" 'In Whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death, nor going, nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship; break all other idols!'

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“My time is short. I have got to unbreast whatever I have to say, without caring if it smarts some or irritates others. Therefore, my dear M——, do not be frightened at whatever drops from my lips, for the Power behind me is not Vivekananda but He, the Lord, and He knows best. If I have to please the world, that will be injuring the world; the voice of the majority is wrong, seeing that they govern and make the sad state of the world. Every new thought must create opposition, in the civilised a polite sneer, in the savage, vulgar howls and filthy scandals.

“Even these earth-worms must stand up erect. Even children must see light. . . . A hundred waves of prosperity have come and gone over my country. We have learnt the lesson which no child can yet understand. It is vanity, this hideous world of Mâyâ. ‘Renounce’ and be happy. Give up the ideas of sex and possessions. There is no other bond. Marriage and sex and money are the only living devils. All earthly love proceeds from the *body, body, body*. No sex, no possessions; as these fall off, the eyes open to spiritual vision. The soul regains its own infinite power. . . .”

In connection with this matter and as a further explanation of the Swami’s attitude towards American women *en masse*, no better evidence of his esteem for them can be adduced than an excerpt from a private letter he wrote in 1894 to the Raja of Khetri:

“‘It is not the building that makes the Home, but it is the wife that makes it,’ says a Sanskrit poet, and how true it is! The roof that affords you shelter from heat and cold and rain is not to be judged by the pillars that support it,—the finest Corinthian columns though they be, but by the real spirit-pillar who is the centre—the real support of the home—the women. Judged by that standard, the American home will not suffer in comparison with any home in the world.

“I have heard many stories about the American home; of liberty running into licence, of unwomanly women, smashing under their feet all the peace and happiness of the home life in their mad liberty-dance, and much nonsense of that type. And now after a year’s experience of the American homes, of American women,—how utterly false and erroneous that sort of judgment appears! American women! A hundred lives would not be sufficient to pay my deep debt of gratitude to you! I have not words enough to express my gratitude to you.

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The Oriental hyperbole alone expresses the depth of Oriental gratitude. 'If the Indian Ocean were an inkstand, the highest mountain of the Himalayas the pen, the earth the scroll, and the time itself the writer, still it will not express my gratitude to you!'

"Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth or learning to recommend me,—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution,—and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother. They remained my friends even when their own priests were trying to persuade them to give up the 'dangerous Heathen,'—even when day after day their best friends had told them not to stand by this 'unknown foreigner who may be of dangerous character.' But they are better judges of character and soul, they, the noble-minded, the unselfish, the pure,—for it is the pure mirror which catches the reflection.

"And how many beautiful homes I have seen, how many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children are beyond expression, how many daughters and maidens 'pure as the icicle on Diana's temple' and withal with much culture, education and spirituality in the highest sense! Is America then full of only wingless angels in the shape of women? There is good and bad everywhere, true,—but a nation is not to be judged by its weaklings called the wicked, as they are only the weeds which lag behind, but by the good, the noble and the pure, who indicate the national life-current flowing clear and vigorous.

"Do you judge of an apple tree and the taste of its fruits by the unripe, undeveloped, worm-eaten ones that strew the ground, large even though their number be sometimes? If there is one ripe, developed apple, that *one* would indicate the powers, the possibility and the purpose of the apple tree, and not the hundreds that could not grow.

"And then the modern American women,—I admire their broad and liberal minds. I have seen many liberal and broad-minded men too in this country, some even in the narrowest churches, but here is the difference; there is danger with the men to become broad at the cost of religion, at the cost of spirituality; women broaden out in sympathy with everything that is good everywhere without losing a bit of their own religion. They intuitively know that it is a question of positivity and not negativity, a question of addition and not

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subtraction. They are everyday becoming aware of the fact that it is the affirmative and positive side of everything that shall be stored up, and that this very act of accumulating the affirmative and positive, and therefore soul-building forces of nature, is what destroys the negative and destructive elements in the world. . . ."

One could continue quoting many passages, descriptive of the Swami's high appreciation of and even esteem for American womanhood. The one quoted, however, gives the spirit which is the key-note to all of them. Though the biographers of the Swami might have overlooked the mention of all these unpleasant controversies and criticism which were of trifling concern to the Swami himself, these had to be considered, in justice to him, as they created a stir at the time amongst his admirers and sympathisers.

Turning now from these distracting thoughts, one finds the Swami supremely happy at the sight of one of his Gurubhais relieving hundreds of the starving and the diseased in the famine-stricken district of Murshidabad in Bengal. Out on his wanderings, Swami Akhandananda was deeply moved at seeing the wide-spread distress in the villages and, though penniless, he at once set himself to work to do what little he could to ameliorate it. On hearing of this, Swami Vivekananda sent two of his disciples, Swami Nityananda and Brahmachari Sureshwarananda, to help in the work, and started a fund at once, to which contributions poured in, chiefly from Calcutta, Benares and Madras, and from the Mahâ-bodhi Society. Swami Akhandananda managed the matter so well that the District Magistrate of Murshidabad who controlled the Government Relief Fund remarked, "I have been able to relieve myself of all responsibilities with regard to the villages covered by the Swami."

The Swami was also delighted to learn, at this

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time, of the success of the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission at Calcutta, and of the Vedânta missionary work that Swami Ramakrishnananda was carrying on with his characteristic zeal in Madras and its neighbourhood. Arrived there at the end of March, he had made himself popular by his exemplary character and his activities, and had delivered a series of lectures on the lives of the Prophets, besides other lectures on the Vedânta philosophy and classes on the Gita and the Upanishads.

When the Swami's visit was drawing to a close his friends in Almora began talking about a lecture. The English residents in the station expressed a wish to hear him, and invited him to give an address at the English Club. Arrangements were therefore made for two lectures in the Zilla School, and one in the Club. There had been a wish expressed by many persons that one of the lectures should be in Hindi. Though unacquainted with the Hindi language the Swami acquitted himself well in the lecture and drew admiration from his hearers for the masterly way in which he treated the subject-matter. The lecture at the English Club was attended by all the English residents in the station. Col. Pulley of the Goorkhas was in the Chair. A short historical sketch of the rise of the worship of the tribal God, and its spread through the conquest of other tribes, was followed by an account of the Vedas. Their nature, character and teaching were briefly touched upon. Then the Swami spoke about the soul, comparing the Western method, which seeks for the solution of vital and religious mysteries in the outside world, with the Eastern method, which finding no answer in nature outside, turns its enquiry within. Passing from this theme, naturally so dear to the heart of a Hindu, the Swami reached the climax of his power as a spiritual teacher when he described



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the relation of the soul to God, its aspiration and real unity with God. "For some time," writes an eyewitness, "it seemed as though the Teacher, his words, his audience, and the spirit pervading them all, were one. No longer was there any consciousness of 'I' and 'Thou,' of 'This' or 'That.' The different units collected there, were for the time being lost and merged in the spiritual radiance which emanated so powerfully from the great Teacher, and held them all, more than spellbound."

The Swami now regained to some extent his lost health, for a complete recovery it was not. But health or no health, his mission in India and the delivery of his message to her people necessitated constant work, and we next see him whirling to and fro from one province to another, teaching privately, preaching publicly, completing his work, for he felt it was nearing completion, in so far as his physical personality was concerned.

After a stay of two months and a half in Almora, the Swami, desiring to accept pressing invitations to visit various places in the Punjab and Kashmir, came down to the plains. He reached Bareilly on August 9. The Reception Committee composed of the distinguished residents of the city, cordially welcomed him and took him and his party to their clubhouse, where arrangements had been made for their stay. He had hardly arrived when he was attacked with fever. He remained in Bareilly four days, and though ill all the time, gave much time to religious discourse. On the morning of the tenth he visited the Arya Samâj Orphanage, and on the next day as the result of an impressive conversation with a gathering of students on the need of a Students' Society which might conjointly carry out his ideas of practical Vedânta and work for others, one was estab-

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lished then and there. The same day after the mid-day meal he told Swami Achyutananda that he would live only about five or six years more. It was a significant prophetic utterance, though not treated seriously at the time, inasmuch as he left his body five years later on July 4, 1902.

On the night of the twelfth he left for Ambala, where he stayed for a week. He was met at the station by a large number of people, amongst whom were Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had been at Simla. During his sojourn he daily held religious talks at all hours of the day with many people of different creeds, including Mohammedan, Brâhmo, Arya Samâjist and Hindu, on Sâstric and other topics. On the evening of the sixteenth at the earnest request of a professor of the Lahore College, who wanted to have a record of the Swami's voice, he delivered a short lecture into a phonograph. Though unwell, the next day, he delivered an impressive lecture lasting for an hour and a half before a select gathering of citizens, who applauded him enthusiastically. All through he injected into the minds of his hearers his plans for the improvement of the Motherland. He did not leave Ambala without visiting the Hindu-Mohammedan School, an institution which interested him, because it was a symbol of the spirit of unity between the two great races in India. The Swami received many invitations from various places, but he was so weakened by the fever which he had contracted on his way down from Almora that he was unable to accept any of them.

On the twentieth the Swami with his party including Mr. and Mrs. Sevier arrived at Amritsar where also he was received at the station with great honours; but he stayed there for only four or five hours at the residence of Mr. Todor Mall, Bar-at-Law,

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for his increasing ill-health made it imperative for him to retire to Dharamsala, a delightful hill-station near by in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. There, with the exception of a few casual visitors, he stayed until the thirty-first, in comparative retirement. About that date he decided once more to return to the plains in order to spread his ideas. Coming back to Amritsar he stayed for two days, during which he had frequent discussions on various religious subjects with Rai Mulraj and other leading Arya Samâjists. From there he went to Rawalpindi and though arrangements had been made for his sojourn there, he left immediately for Murree, again in search of health and in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his party. While at this place, he was the guest of Mr. Hansraj, a well-known pleader. He was frequently invited to lecture publicly, but his persistent ill-health prevented this. Several conversations were held, however, in which he gave out his now-celebrated ideas and plans of work in India.

His stay in Murree was short, for on September 6, he deemed it necessary for many reasons to go on a short visit to Kashmir. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had come to Murree with the intention of accompanying the Swami to Kashmir were compelled to remain behind, owing to Mr. Sevier having suddenly fallen ill. The day before the Swami's departure, a letter reached him from Mr. Sevier with this news, and with eight hundred rupees in currency notes enclosed as the sum forwarded to him to meet the expenses of his journey. It was seven o'clock in the evening. He turned to a friend and said with an anxious look, "What shall I do with so much money, Jogesh? We are Fakirs,—we are sure to spend it all if it be with us. Let me take only half the sum,—I think that ought to be sufficient for me and my Gurubhais

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and disciples travelling with me." Saying this he went to see Mr. Sevier, though he was not well at the time, and persuaded him to take back half the money offered.

Leaving Murree, he and his party reached Baramulla by Tonga, on the eighth, whence he started at once for Srinagar by boat. At this place he arrived on the tenth as the guest of Mr. Justice Rishibar Mukhopadhyaya. Here the Swami was literally besieged by visitors. On the third day after his arrival he paid an informal visit to the Palace of the Maharaja, where he was received with marked distinction by two of the higher officials, one of whom, Dr. Mitra, informed him that on the next day Raja Rama Singh, the brother of the ruling Prince, would be pleased to see him. The Swami did not meet the Maharaja as he was then at Jammoo.

The Raja received the Swami with great cordiality and honour making him take his seat on a chair, while he himself sat with the officials on the floor. The interview lasted for two hours, many subjects concerning religion and the rehabilitation of the masses being touched upon. The Raja was deeply impressed, and expressed an earnest desire to help the Swami in carrying out his plans of work.

Until his return to Murree, early in the first week of October, the Swami was busy filling many engagements, of both private and public character, and visiting the places of historic interest with which Kashmir abounds. Sâdhus, Pandits, Vidyârthis, officials of high rank and scores of citizens visited him at the house of his host. Whenever he could be free, he retired to the house-boat which the Wazir of Raja Amar Singh had placed at his disposal. The Wazir himself became an ardent admirer of the Swami. He was often invited by the nobility of the town to dine

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at their houses, and on one of these occasions he discoursed with many Brâhmans and Pandits assembled there. The Swami also made frequent excursions by boat to near-by places, or visited the Bazars, or listened to singing and instrumental music. On September 20, he went by house-boat to Pampur, and Anantanâg, where he saw the historic temple of Vijbera, and then made his way afoot to Mârtanda, at which place he stayed at the rest-house for pilgrims, and discoursed learnedly to a large gathering of priests. Thence he set out for Acchabal. On the way he was shown a temple, which legend relates to the Pândava times. He was most enthusiastic in his admiration of the exquisite workmanship on this edifice, and stated that it was more than two thousand years old.

Slowly the Swami wended his way back from this interesting place, by boat from the Uhlar Lake, to Baramulla. The delightful climate and the free outdoor life had restored him and he felt some of his old vigour and power.

Returning to Murree he was hailed with rejoicings by the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents and by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. Here the Swami was alternately the guest of the latter, and of Nibaran Babu, at whose house he received numerous visitors and held many conversations. On the evening of October 14, an address of welcome was presented to him in a meeting on behalf of the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents of Murree. The Swami in reply gave a talk which delighted the audience immensely. The following day he went to Rawalpindi and was cordially welcomed by his host, Mr. Hansraj.

He had been there scarcely two days when he lectured to a considerable audience in the beautiful garden of Mr. Sujan Singh, who was the President

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of the meeting. For two hours the Swami discoursed lucidly on Hinduism, supporting his arguments with quotations from the Vedas. An English disciple who was present says, Swamiji, with a wreath of flowers on his head and a garland round his neck sometimes strolling in the course of his lecture, as was his wont, and sometimes leaning against a pillar also decorated with foliage, wreaths and flowers, looked in his flowing saffron-coloured robe and sash like a Greek god. Moreover, as a background to this, the audience mostly sitting on the lawn, turbaned and cross-legged, with the sun setting in the distance, made altogether a wondrously picturesque scene."

One catches a glimpse of the intense activity of the Swami at this time, or indeed during most of the time that he was before the public, through an entry in the diary of a devoted companion, which reads:

"*17th October.* In the morning, Swamiji talked on religious subjects with the visitors at Mr. Hansraj's house. Then he went to the Cantonment to keep an invitation to dinner at Nimai Babu's house, where he talked on religious subjects with the Bengalee gentlemen assembled there. He returned from there at about 3 p.m. After a short rest he went to Mr. Sujan Singh's garden to deliver a lecture on Hinduism. . . . Returning from there he instructed a gentleman in the secret of performing Sâdhanâs. At night he went to supper at Mr. Bhaktaram's house in the company of Mr. Justice Narayandas, Swami Prakashananda, Mr. Hansraj and others. From there he returned home at 10 p.m., and talked with some of his disciples on matters religious, until three o'clock in the morning."

On the night of October 20, he was off again, this time to Jammoo in the Jammoo State of the Maharaja of Kashmir, in response to an invitation from the Maharaja. He was met officially at the station and informed that he was a guest of the State. The Maharaja's library was visited in the evening, and on the day following, the Swami had a long talk with

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Babu Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya, an officer of the Kashmir State, with reference to the establishment of a monastery somewhere in Kashmir.

On the twenty-third he had a long interview with the Maharaja. There were present the two brothers of the Maharaja and principal officers of the State. In the course of the conversation he stressed the foolishness of adhering to meaningless customs and outward observances, and traced the national servility of the last seven hundred years, to the misconception of true religious ideals and to the blind following of all sorts of superstitions. He said, "By committing that which is real sin, such as adultery, etc., one is not outcasted in these days; now all sin, all offence to society, relates to food only!" The Swami then defended his sea-voyage with his usual vigour and pointed out that without travelling in foreign countries real education was not gained. Finally he dwelt upon the significance of preaching Vedânta in Europe and America and upon his own mission and plan of work in India. He concluded saying, "I deem it a great good fortune, if by doing good to my country I have to go to hell!" The Maharaja and others were highly pleased with the interview, which lasted for nearly four hours.

Later in the day he paid a visit to the junior Raja who received him with equal reverence. On the next day, he delivered a public lecture, which pleased the Maharaja so much, that he asked the Swami to deliver another lecture the next day, and further expressed the desire that he might remain at least ten or twelve days longer and address meetings every other day. On the twenty-fifth the Swami inspected the municipal power-house, held discussions on religious subjects and talked about the Arya Samâj; in these talks he pointed out its shortcomings to

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Swami Achyutananda in a friendly spirit, and deplored the backwardness of the Punjabees in knowledge. In the afternoon, according to the wish of the Maharaja, he lectured to a large audience for two hours dealing with all the Sâstras from the Vedas to the Purânas. He then paid a visit to the library and saw the illumination of the city on the occasion of the Dewâli festival. The next three days were devoted mostly to the reception of visitors, and in talks with them he gave out many important ideas on the profound truths relating to religion and social ethics. During this tour the Swami spoke and lectured mostly in Hindi. The power and life that he put into the Hindi language was so unique that the Maharaja of Kashmir requested him to write a few papers in that language, which he did and they were greatly appreciated.

On October 29, the Swami paid a final visit to the Maharaja and informed him of his proposed departure for Sialkote as a deputation from that place had come with a pressing invitation. The Prince parted from the Swami with much regret, requesting him, that whensoever he visited Jammoo or Kashmir he must be his guest.

Taking up the thread of the Swami's history from this time until he left Lahore for Dehra-Dun, Mr. J. J. Goodwin, who had accompanied the Swami on his Jammoo trip, writes as follows:

"Although by no means restored to health, the Swami Vivekananda is in active work again, this time in the North-West. After a visit of some weeks to Kashmir, where his views secured the favourable consideration of H. H. the Maharaja, and assurances of his support in the event of practical work being undertaken in the State, the Swami paid a short visit to Jammoo, lecturing there in Hindi to a most appreciative audience. From Jammoo he went to Sialkote (Punjab) as the guest of Lala Mool Chand, M.A., LL.B., and two



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lectures were arranged for him, one in English, and one in Hindi. One theme was common to all these lectures, as to all which have since followed, that religion must be practical to be religion at all. The Swami seems daily to be becoming more emphatic on this point, and is enforcing his views by starting works of various kinds which seem to suit the needs of the places he visits and the characteristics of their people. Thus, at Sialkote, he strongly urged the establishment of an educational institution for girls, and as the result of his two days' visit a committee was formed consisting of most of the influential men of the town, with Lala Mool Chand as Secretary, to at once give the proposal practical effect.

"Lahore was next visited, and the Swami was received at the station by a large crowd, including many of the members of the Sanâtana Dharma Samâj in whose hands the reception was left. He was driven through the picturesque streets of the city to Raja Dhyân Singh's palace, and afterwards put up with Babu N. N. Gupta, the editor of the *Tribune* of Lahore. On Friday evening, he lectured in the large courtyard of the old palace on 'The Problem Before Us.' The numbers present were large and the space available was altogether too small to accommodate all who came to hear, and the necessity for disappointing many, at one time threatened to prevent the holding of the meeting at all. After at least two thousand had been refused admission, there still remained fully four thousand, who listened to an excellent discourse. On the following Tuesday, another large crowd gathered in the Pandal of Prof. Bose's Bengal Circus, to hear the Swami's lecture on Bhakti.

"The third lecture, on the following Friday evening, was a triumphant success. The arrangements, this time entirely made by students of the four Lahore Colleges, were exceedingly good, and the audience, without being inconveniently large, was in every sense representative. The subject for the evening was Vedânta, and the Swami for over two hours gave, even for him, a masterly exposition of the monistic philosophy and religion of India. The manner in which, at the outset, he traced the psychological and cosmological ideas on which religion in India is founded, was marvellously clear, and his insistence that Advaita is alone able to meet the attacks not only of science but also of Buddhism and agnosticism against religious and transcendental ideas, was conveyed in definite language and was full of convincing power. From beginning to end the lecture preached strength—belief in man in order

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that belief in God might follow—and every word of perhaps the finest lecture the Swami has given in India was itself full of strength. . . . The lecture created great enthusiasm and the Swami found it in no way difficult to induce a number of students, who were his constant attendants while in Lahore, to take steps to put it into practice. In fact, he held a meeting for students, at which, after hearing his suggestions, an association was formed, purely non-sectarian in character, the work of which, as it gradually unfolded, should be to help the poor—and where possible by searching them out in every district of the town,—to nurse the sick poor, and to give night education to the ignorant poor.

“Two days later, the Swami left for Dehra-Dun, on business. . . .”

His non-sectarianism was especially evident in Lahore, for though he was pressed by a certain community of the orthodox Hindus to preach openly against the Arya Samâjists he would not lend himself to their wishes. He did consent, however, at their request, to deliver a lecture on the Srâddha ceremony, in which the Arya Samâjists disbelieve, but in doing so he in nowise attacked them. The lecture was not a public one, but took the form of a conversazione at which were present some of the leading members of both the rival parties. He eloquently discussed on the necessity and uses of the Hindu rite of Srâddha, and defended it in a dignified manner against the attacks made by some Arya Samâjists who came forward to argue with him. In tracing the origin of that time-honoured institution, the Swami said that spirit-worship was the beginning of Hindu religion. At first the Hindus used to invoke the spirits of their departed ancestors in some man, and then worship and offer him food. By and by it was found that the men who acted as mediums for these disembodied spirits suffered very much physically afterwards. So they gave up the practice and substituted instead an effigy of grass (Kushaputtali), and invoking the

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departed spirits of their ancestors in it offered to it worship and Pindas (balls of rice). The Vedic invocation of the Devas for worship and sacrifice, he pointed out, was a development of this spirit-worship.

Be that as it may, the Swami's mission in the Punjab was, pre-eminently, to establish harmony and peace in place of discord and rivalry among the parties holding divergent views: the Arya Samâjists who stood for reinterpreted Hinduism, and the Sanâtanists who represented the orthodox Hindu community. That he succeeded in bringing this about for the time being at least is evidenced by the fact that the former vied with the latter in showing their regard for him and flocked in numbers to listen to his words. Indeed, so generous was his own attitude towards the Arya Samâjists and so respectful their feeling for him, that for some days there was a persistent rumour to the effect that several of the leading Arya Samâjists desired that the Swami should be requested to become the head of the Samâj itself. He even propounded a method for rooting out the antagonism between the Arya Samâjists and the Mohammedans.

In one of the conversations the Swami deplored the lack of emotion in the Punjabees, remarking that the land of the five rivers was rather a dry place, spiritually, and that the minds of the people should be made responsive to the softer elements of religion by the culture of Bhakti. He thought that the introduction of the system of Sri Chaitanya's Sankirtana, as it is in vogue among the Vaishnavas of Bengal, would be a desirable thing. A proposal was made by some of the Punjabee gentlemen, that there should be a public Sankirtana procession, but the idea had to be given up ultimately on account of some unavoidable events.

It was in Lahore that the Swami met Mr. Tirtha

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Râm Goswâmi, then a professor in mathematics at one of the Lahore Colleges. Some time later, this gentleman took Sannyâs and became widely known as Swami Râm Tirtha. He also preached Vedânta both in India and America and gained a considerable following. It was under his guidance that the college students of Lahore did much in helping to arrange for the public lectures which the Swami gave there. Personally he admired the Swami immensely and invited him and his disciples including Mr. Goodwin, to dine at his residence. After dinner the Swami sang a song which begins with: "Jahan Ram wuhan kam nahim, jahan kam, nahin Ram," which translated reads: "Where God-consciousness is, there is no desire; where desire is, there is no God-consciousness." Tirtha Ram himself writes: "His melodious voice made the meaning of the song thrill through the hearts of those present." His host placed his private library at the disposal of the Swami, but of the numerous volumes, the latter chose only "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman, whom he was accustomed to call "The Sannyâsin of America."

One evening Tirtha Ram, accompanied by the Swami, his Gurubhais and a number of young men was walking along a public highway. The party broke into several groups. "In the last group," according to Swami Ram Tirtha's own words, in a letter written later from Darjeeling, "in answer to a question I was explaining: 'An ideal Mahâtman is one who has lost all sense of separate personality and lives as the Self of all. When the air in any region absorbs enough of the solar heat, it becomes rarefied and rises higher. The air from different regions then rushes in to occupy this vacuum, thus setting the whole atmosphere in motion. So does a Mahâtma marvelously infuse life and spirit into a nation through self-

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reform.' The Swami's group happening to be silent at the time, he overheard this part of our conversation and stopped suddenly and emphatically remarked, 'Such was my Guru, Paramahansa Ramakrishna Deva.' "

The relationship between the Swami and Tirtha Ram was most cordial, and before the Swami left, the latter presented him with a gold watch. The Swami took it very kindly, but put it back in Tirtha Ram's pocket saying, "Very well, friend, *I shall wear it here in this pocket.*"

A touching incident occurred at Lahore, when Motilal Bose, an old neighbour and playmate of the Swami, the owner of Professor Bose's Circus, came to meet him. He was awe-struck at the reverence which hundreds were paying to him. Feeling a little embarrassed, he approached the Swami with the question, "How shall I address you now, as Naren or as Swamiji?" The Swami replied, "Have you gone mad, Moti? Don't you know I am the same Naren, and you are the same Moti?" Indeed, everyone of his old comrades and class-mates, who met him in the days of his glory, after his return from the West, noticed not the slightest change in his ways and behaviour. To quote one instance among many, when Upendra Babu, another class-mate of his, to whom he had prophesied his own future greatness when studying in the Presidency College of Calcutta, came to meet him at Balaram Babu's house, the Swami seeing him enter the room stood up and with outstretched arms embraced him warmly.

It was the state of the Swami's health which was largely responsible for his leaving Lahore, after ten days of strenuous work, for Dehra-Dun. The return to the heat of the plains had caused a relapse of the illness which had taken him to the Himalayas, and

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he was in consequence forced to postpone his lecture-tour. At Dehra-Dun he led a quiet life for some ten days, but he was never idle. Gathering his disciples about him he would hold a class on Ramanuja's commentary on the Brahma Sutras. This class was continued all the rest of his trip. Even on the way to Khetri, after they had rested from the journey and had had their bath and meal, he would call them and begin the class. He also held classes on the Sâṅkhya philosophy and appointed Swami Achyutananda to teach it in his presence. Sometimes when Swami Achyutananda, who was a very learned Sanskrit scholar, could not make out the meaning of a text, the Swami would in a few words explain it very clearly. He was interested at Dehra-Dun, as he was also in Kashmir and in Dharamsala in the purchase of a tract of land for an institution for the training of Brahmachârins.

While he was at Dehra-Dun he received constant invitations from Khetri. The Raja of that State was exceedingly eager to give his subjects an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Swami's ideas. Besides, personally, he wished to see the Swami, his Guru. So the Swami started from Dehra-Dun for Rajputana. On the way he visited Delhi, Alwar, and Jeypore. At Delhi he was the guest of Nata Krishna, a man in humble position, whom he had met in his Parivrâjaka days at Hathras. Wealthy residents of Delhi pressed him to become their guest, but he preferred remaining with his old friend. At Delhi he held a long conversazione at which many distinguished persons were present.

Together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his Gurubhais and disciples, he visited all the memorable ruins and monuments of the past glories of the Moghul Emperors, which are scattered all round Delhi within

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a radius of a few miles. Says one who accompanied him: "He vivified the past before us. Indeed, we forgot the present in the past and lived with dead Emperors and mighty Kings of old."

The Swami then went to Alwar where he was accorded a great reception. During his sojourn there, he was lodged with his disciples in one of the residences belonging to the Maharaja, which had been secured by the Swami's followers in Alwar for the purpose. He had several interviews with the principal officials, the Maharaja being at the time unavoidably absent from the State. But the chief attraction of his visit lay in meeting once again his intimate friends and disciples with whom he had passed many a day of his Parivrājaka life. His present visit was full of touching episodes which revealed the true Sannyâsin he was. For instance, at the railway station, when the reception ceremony was going on and he was surrounded by prominent men, he espied one of his poor but devoted disciples, dressed in humble garb standing at a distance. The Swami without caring for the formalities of reception or for etiquette called aloud, "Ramasnehi ! Ramasnehi !"—for that was the name of the man—and having had him brought before him through the crowd of the notables enquired about his welfare and that of his other friends, and talked with him freely as of old. This instance brings to mind a similar occurrence in Madras. During the procession, the Swami, while seated in his carriage of honour, saw Swami Sadananda standing amidst the huge mass that crowded the streets. He at once shouted out: "Come, Sadananda ! Come, my boy !" And he made this disciple sit with him in the same carriage.

Among the invitations to dinner that he accepted

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during his short stay in Alwar was one from an old woman, who had entertained the Swami to Bhikshâ at her house on his former visit. But in her case, the Swami invited himself sending word to her that he longed for some of the thick Chapâtis (unleavened bread) he had had from her hands years ago ! Her heart was filled with joy and when she was serving her guests she said to the Swami, "Poor as I am, where shall I get delicacies to give you, my son, howsoever I may wish !" The Swami relished this simple meal saying to his disciples more than once, "Look here ! How devout, how motherly this old woman is ! How Sâttvic are these thick Chapâtis made by herself !" The Swami knowing her poverty, unknown to her, thrust into the hand of the guardian of the house a hundred-rupee note.

In reporting the Swami's visit to Khetri, Swami Sadananda writes as follows to the *Brahmavâdin* on December 12 :

," . . . His Highness the Raja of Khetri ordered all the necessary and convenient arrangements on the way from Khetri to Jeypore, and himself drove a distance of twelve miles to receive the Swami. The whole town of Khetri was filled with joy and enthusiasm. The citizens arranged for a grand dinner and brilliant illumination and fireworks in honour of His Highness' successful return from his travels in England and on the Continent, as well as for the advent of Swamiji, whose arrival on such an occasion was looked upon as a Godsend, and doubled the enthusiasm in the hearts of the whole public. His Highness and the Swami were presented with addresses to which were given suitable replies. . . .

"On December 11, there was an assemblage in the school premises where both the Raja and the Swami were given numerous addresses from different committees. The Rama-krishna Mission, Calcutta, the Education Department, Khetri, and the local Young Men's Debating Club, were among those who presented addresses to the Raja. Then many short poems, some of them especially composed in honour of the Raja, were recited by the young boys of the school. Swamiji distributed



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the prizes to the meritorious students at the request of the President, the Raja. The Raja made a brief reply to the addresses presented to him, thanking especially the Ramakrishna Mission, for the Chief of the Mission was present there. . . . Afterwards, Swamiji delivered a brief speech with his usual fluency, in which he thanked the Raja and spoke of him highly, saying that what little he had done for the improvement of India was done through the Raja's instrumentality."

At the reception, his subjects presented the Maharaja, as is customary on such occasions, with five trays full of gold Mohurs, the greater part of which he donated to educational institutions in his State. Then all the officials and subjects present came before the Swami, one by one, in turn, bowed and presented him with two rupees each. This function lasted for two hours. When he left Khetri the Maharaja gave the Swami three thousand rupees which was sent to the Math in charge of Swamis Sadananda and Sachchidananda (senior).

On December 20, the Swami delivered a lecture on "Vedântism," in the hall of the Maharaja's bungalow in which he lodged with his disciples. The audience consisted of the principal gentlemen of the place. Some European ladies and gentlemen were also present. The Swami spoke for more than an hour and a half about ancient civilisations, the Greek and the Aryan. He then traced the influence of Indian thought on Europe, in Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and the Egyptian neo-Platonists, and showed how it even entered Spain, Germany and other European countries at different periods of history down to our own times. He discussed the Vedas and the Vedic mythology and explained the different ideas and stages of worship found therein, in the course of which he pointed out that behind them all stood as the background the idea, "एकं सत् विद्वा बहुधा वदन्ति"— "That which exists is

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One, sages call It variously.” Continuing he said that, unlike the Greeks, the Aryans dissatisfied with external nature had gone into the Inner Self, and solved the problem of life by Self-realisation. The Swami then passed on to the consideration of the Dualistic, Qualified-monistic, and Advaitic theories, and reconciled them by saying that they were but steps leading to the final evolution of Advaitism, the last step being “तत् त्वमसि” —“Thou art That.” He deplored the system of text-torturing, of which even the greatest commentators were guilty. Ramanuja had distorted the Advaita texts of the Upanishads, while Sankara had done the same with the Dvaita texts. Proceeding further, the Swami regretted that in modern India, “The people are neither Hindus, nor Vedântins,—they are merely ‘don’t-touchists;’ the kitchen is their temple, and cooking-pots, their object of worship. This state of things must go. The sooner it is given up, the better for our religion. Let the Upanishads shine in their glory, and at the same time let not quarrels exist among the different sects.”

The Swami had to rest in the middle of his speech, so exhausted was he; the audience waited patiently until he was able to resume. He spoke for another half hour, and explained that knowledge was the finding of unity in diversity, and that the highest point in every science was reached when it found the one unity underlying all variety, and this was as true in physical science as in the spiritual. The Swami closed his address with a tribute to the noble character of the Maharaja who, as a true Kshattriya, had assisted him so materially in spreading the Eternal Truths of Hinduism in the West. The lecture made a lasting impression on the people of Khetri.

To the Swami at Khetri work was both pleasure

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and rest. Besides lecturing and attending to public functions in his honour he spent the time in riding and sight-seeing with his companions and his royal disciple. A curious incident happened here. When the Maharaja and the Swami were out riding one day, they passed a narrow pathway with overhanging branches of trees and prickly shrubs. The Maharaja just held a branch of one of the shrubs to make way for the Swami. But the Swami did not like his being helped in this way, as he thought it was rather deprecatory of his manhood, and remarked to this effect to the Maharaja. But the Maharaja gave the significant reply, "Well, Swamiji, it has been the duty of Kshattriyas to protect Dharma always," to which the Swami remarked after a short period of silence, "Perhaps you are right."

Next the Swami is seen passing rapidly through Kishengarh, Ajmere, Jodhpur and Indore on his way to Khandwa. At Jodhpur he was the guest of the Prime Minister, Raja Sir Pratap Singh, for about ten days. When he arrived at Khandwa in Indore, as the guest of Babu Haridas Chatterjee, he had high fever, but he soon got over it. After a stay of about a week he left Khandwa for Calcutta. The night before he left, his host pressed him for initiation. He firmly held the Swami's feet and implored him to give him Mantra. The Swami avoided, saying that he did not care to make Chelâs and raise the standard of religious or social Gurudom. He, however, advised his host to remember the simple truth, so often repeated, that man can do what man has done. "Man's constitution," he said, "embodies divine omnipotence and this should be realised and set up as the model of all human action."

The Swami must have had reasons of his own for not gratifying the earnest and pious desire of his kind

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host, for it is a fact that he had made disciples before and after, though not without making a thorough study of their personalities. As a true teacher he gave special instructions to different individuals according to their religious temperaments and tendencies. Thus to one he would speak of Bhakti, to another of Jñâna, as the highest ideal, but insisted that everyone should stand on his own legs and rely on himself if he wanted to bring to fruition the highest possibilities of his nature.

The Swami had now almost finished his lecturing campaign in India, during which he outlined his plans to bring about a rehabilitation of the Dharma. He pointed out to the nation the points where they were in agreement and on which they could build their glorious future much more glorious than the past. He showed to them the value and significance of the culture they had inherited from their ancestors,—a culture in comparison with which any other civilization past or present paled into insignificance,—till their hearts throbbed at the very name of India. He pointed out clearly that the Indian nationalism was to be based on the greatness of the past though various new things also had to be assimilated in the process of growth. If we have to be true to the genius of the race, if we have to appeal to the soul of the nation, we have to drink deep of the fountain of the past and then proceed to build the future. This heritage from the past, he pointed out, was essentially a religious heritage. The main current of life in India flowed in the field of religion and from this were supplied the demands of the nation in all departments of life; more than once religion had come to the rescue of the life secular. Religion had released in the past political forces when the old ones were found wanting. The fundamental

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problem in India therefore was to organise the whole country round the spiritual ideal. By religion he meant the eternal principles as taught by the Srutis and not the superstitions and local customs, which are mere accretions requiring a weeding out with a strong hand. Above all he showed that the nation depended upon the character and qualities of its individual members. On the strength of the individuals lay the strength of the whole nation. So each individual, he urged, if he desired the good of the nation as a whole, should try, whatever might be the walk of his life, to build character, acquire such virtues as courage, strength, self-respect, love and service for others. To the young men especially he held out renunciation and service as the highest ideals.

Having finished the lecturing tour the Swami returned to Calcutta, where other aspects of his mission kept him engaged—notably the training of his own disciples, the moulding of their characters so as to enable them to carry into practice his plans for the regeneration of the nation.

## XXXI

### LIFE AT THE MATH AND TRAINING OF THE DISCIPLES

The next period of the Swami's life in India, from January to October, 1898, comprises his stay in Calcutta and at the Math, which was transferred in February from Alambazar to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house on the western bank of the Ganges in the village of Belur, and a long tour which he made in the Himalayas.

The Swami reached Calcutta from Khandwa about the middle of January. On March 30, he left Calcutta for Darjeeling because he felt a great need for a change. On May 3, he was once more in Calcutta, which he again left on May 4, in company with some of his Gurubhais and disciples both Eastern and Western, for Almora, where he remained till June 10. On June 20, he and his party were in Kashmere, where they remained till about the middle of October. Then he returned to the plains and went with his Western disciples as far as Lahore before he left for Calcutta, where he arrived on October 18. This is a general survey of the Swami's movements during these months.

Of his stay in Calcutta, the story is one of continuous engagements. The Math diary gives an account of his varied activities and occupations. He would be constantly engaged in visiting the houses of devotees or in receiving visitors who came to see him at the monastery or at Balaram Babu's house or in writing theses and replying letters. The training of the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins formed the most

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important part of his work during this period. He would spend hours with them in meditation, song, study or in relating the experiences of the various stages of Yoga and spiritual insight. He took regular classes in scriptures and often would lecture on the Gita, Upanishads, the material sciences and history of nations or answer questions which he would invite from the members of the Math, giving illuminating solutions to the problems raised.

Among the many functions in which the Swami took part at this time, that of the consecration of the shrine in the newly-built house of Babu Nava Gopal Ghosh, in Ramakrishnapore, was especially interesting. That householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna had invited the Swami with all the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math to perform the installation ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna's image, and his joy knew no bounds when the Swami consented. On February 6, which happened to be the auspicious full-moon day, the Swami with all the monks arrived by boats at the Ramakrishnapore Ghat, and started a Sankirtan procession in which numerous devotees joined as it wended its way through the streets. The enthusiasm was tremendous; the Swami himself was barefooted and robed in simple Geruâ; about his neck hung a Khol (drum), with which he accompanied the song "The Infant Ramakrishna," himself leading the chorus. Hundreds of people crowded the streets to see him, as he passed. When they found him dressed in simple Geruâ like other Sannyâsins, going barefooted through the streets, singing and playing upon the drum, it was hard to believe that this was he who had unfurled the banner of Vedânta in the West. They cheered him vociferously, impressed with his humble and at the same time regal demeanour!

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Arrived at the host's residence, the Swami and his party were received with reverence, amid the blowing of conch-shell and the beating of gongs. After a while he was led to the worship-room, which was marble-floored and beautifully fitted, with a throne on which was the porcelain picture of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami was delighted at the room and the collection of materials for worship. The lady of the house, being congratulated by him, said with great humility that she and her family were too poor and unworthy to rightly serve the Lord and asked the Swami to bless them. He replied: "Dear mother, our Lord never in his life lived in such a marble-floored room. Born in a rustic, thatched hut, he spent his days in the simplest way. And," he added in his witty way, "if he does not live here, with all these services of devoted hearts, I do not know where else he should!"

Then the Swami having covered himself with ashes, sat on the worshipper's seat and invoked the presence of Sri Ramakrishna, while his disciple, Swami Prakashananda, recited the Mantras appropriate for installation. It was here in this house that the Swami inaugurated the special Salutation to Sri Ramakrishna. Sitting before the image in meditation after the installation ceremony was over, he composed the following Sloka:

स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।

अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

"Salutation to Thee, O Ramakrishna, the Rein-stator of Religion, the Embodiment of all Religions, the Greatest of all Incarnations!"

Day after day, the members of the Order were trained by the Swami, until his ideas became their very own. Through the perspective of his person-



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ality they saw the whole sphere of religious life in a new light and interpreted monastic ideals in original ways. Under his inspiration came upon 'some the desire to practise intense Sâdhanâ and austerities, upon others the yearning to serve the sick and the poor, upon still others the hope of spreading ideas among the great masses. All were saturated with his great spirit and patriotism. He was verily a living fire of thought and soul at this time. Gita ideals, Vedânta, and the ideals of different sects in Hinduism were the constant subjects of discussion and practice but in the foreground at all times was the ideal of the Master. The Baranagore days were oftentimes lived over again. The same old fire was present; the same intellectual brilliance shone forth; the same spiritual fervour was always uppermost.

It must be mentioned here that in the early part of the year 1898, the Swami purchased a large tract of land, about fifteen acres in extent, together with a building on the bank of the Ganges at Belur, almost opposite the Baranagore bathing-ghat, for a big sum, most of which was given to him by his devoted friend and admirer, Miss Henrietta F. Muller. She had met the Swami on his first visit to the West both in America and England and it was she who together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and Mr. E. T. Sturdy, met the expenditures of the Swami's English work. Though possessed of large means she was naturally of an ascetic bent of mind and being also liberal minded and spiritual in her outlook she found in the Swami's personality and teaching the essentials for spiritual life. Once she even decided to give up the world. But the Swami persuaded her not to do so, but to help the world as much as she could, by remaining in it and living a selfless life.

The purchasing of this particular site was some-

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what in the nature of the fulfilment of a prophecy, for long before his going to the West he had said to some of his Gurubhais, whilst standing on the Baranagore Ghat and when there was yet no thought of a site for the monastery, "Something tells me that our permanent Math will be in this neighbourhood across the river." Though the property was purchased at the beginning of 1898, it did not become the permanent headquarters of the monks until January, 1899. The grounds, which were used as a dockyard for country-boats, were very hollow and uneven, and had to be filled up and levelled; besides many repairs had to be done to the building and a second story added, and one new building, a temple to Sri Ramakrishna, constructed. For all of these except the last, the Swami had sufficient funds which he had received from his London disciples. From every view-point the purchase was a success. That the monastery was on the other side of the river, and four miles by the public road across the Howrah bridge from the metropolis, made it more secluded.

Somewhat later the Swami received a large sum of money from Mrs. Ole Bull. She had made the acquaintance of the Swami at the beginning of his American work and had assisted him in a large way financially. She was well known all over America on account of her philanthropy, her culture and social position as the wife of the celebrated violinist. The Swami was often her guest at Cambridge, near Boston, and was the chief figure, on many occasions at her *salons* to which were invited the most distinguished scholars of the world. Her help on the present occasion put the monastery on a sound financial basis, much to the Swami's relief. It helped him to endow the monastery itself, and to build the temple of Sri Ramakrishna. Thus in all, the monastery,

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when completed, together with its endowment trust, represented more than one hundred thousand rupees.

The Math at the Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house was full by the time of the Sivarâtri festival, which precedes by three days the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Saradananda had recently returned from America; Swami Sivananda had come back from his Vedânta work in Ceylon, and Swami Trigunatita from Dinajpur after finishing his famine relief work there. The Swami was highly pleased with the work of all of them. He also congratulated Swami Brahmananda on the success of the Ramakrishna Mission under his guidance, and Swami Turiyananda for having, in his absence, trained the young Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math. At the suggestions of the Swami, the latter prepared, in the afternoon of the Sivarâtri day, thanksgiving addresses in English to everyone of the Swamis, and these were read out to them at a meeting of the Brotherhood held at the Math, the Swami being in the chair. On being called upon by him, his Gurubhais in turn replied in suitable words to the addresses. Of Swami Turiyananda he remarked, "He has the oratorical voice." Before rising to speak, the Swami said: "It is very difficult to address a parlour meeting. Before a large gathering it is easy to forget oneself in the subject of the discourse, and hence one is able to carry the audience with him. But this is not possible when only a few men are present. However, let me try." He gave sound counsel to his Gurubhais and disciples in regard to the line of action they should adopt, both from the individual and the communal aspect.

The actual birthday ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna, as distinguished from its public celebration, took place

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at the monastery this year under the supervision of the Swami himself. On this occasion the Swami ordered a lot of sacred threads to be brought to the monastery. As one after another of the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna or of himself came, he let it be known that those of them who were not Brâhmanas, but who really belonged to the other two twice-born castes, were on that day to be invested with the sacred thread. Speaking to his Brâhmana disciple Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, whom he commissioned to perform the ceremony, he said: "The children of our Lord are indeed Brâhmanas. Besides, the Vedas themselves say that every one of the twice-born castes has the right to be invested with the sacred thread. They have no doubt become Vrâtyas, that is, fallen from their own ritualistic rights, but by performing the ceremony of expiation they are entitled to their own original caste rights again. This is the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Everyone will be purified by taking his name. Therefore this is the best occasion to give the Bhaktas the sacred thread. Give all those who come the appropriate Gâyatri Mantra according as they are Kshattriyas or Vaisyas. All these must be gradually raised to the status of the Brâhmana. All Hindus are brothers. It is we Hindus who have degraded some of our brothers, by saying for centuries, 'We won't touch you!' 'We won't touch you!' No wonder that the whole country is reduced to the verge of humiliation, cowardice and stupidity. You must raise them by preaching to them the gospel of hope and cheer. Say to them, 'You are men like ourselves; you have the same rights that we have!'"

As a result of the Swami's decision more than fifty Bhaktas on that day received the Gâyatri Mantra and the sacred thread, having first had

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their bath in the Ganges and then bowed before the image of Sri Ramakrishna. Of course this procedure was opposed to the orthodox view, but the Swami was determined to impress his ideas boldly upon the public by practical means. The initiates were naturally much ridiculed by their neighbours for having raised themselves to the status of Brâhmanas.

Though the Swami was bold in his attack on the stronghold of modern orthodoxy, he was not usually an advocate of drastic reforms of a destructive nature. He was always in favour of reforms which were constructive through growth from within and in conformity with the Sâstras. In this he, following the Rishis of old, penetrated into the true spirit and meaning of the Sâstras and adapted them to the need of the times, for the good of the race and its religion. The Swami would even have the time-honoured religious institutions and ceremonies strictly observed by the Order. Thus on the occasion of the Sivarâtri festival, he was pained to see that no one at the Math had fasted, as is the custom among devout Hindus.

Following upon the Upanayana ceremony mentioned above, the Sannyâsins of the monastery, joining mirth with devotion, seized upon the Swami and arrayed him as Siva. They put the shell-ear-rings in his ears, covered his whole body with holy snow-white ashes, placed on his head a mass of matted hair which reached to his knees, put bracelets of rosaries on his arms and on his neck hung a long rosary of large Rudrâkshas in three rows. In his left hand they placed the sacred trident. Then they smeared their own bodies with ashes. "The unspeakable beauty of that form of the Swami dressed as Siva," writes Mr. Sarat Chakravarty, "cannot be described; it is something which has to be seen, to be realised. Everyone present declared

afterwards that they felt as if Siva Himself, of youthful, ascetic form, was before them. And the Swami with the Sannyâsins seated round him like so many Bhairavas or attendants of the Great God, seemed to have brought the living presence of the majesty of Kailâsa within the precincts of the Math." The Swami sang a hymn to Sri Rama, and inebriated with the name of the Lord went on repeating again and again, "Rama, Rama, Sri Rama, Rama!" He appeared entranced in Siva nature. The sublimity of his expression deepened a hundredfold! His eyes were half shut; he was seated in Padmâsana, while his hand played on the Tânpurâ (a musical instrument). The whole gathering of monks and devotees was caught up in the spirit of the hour and thrilled with religious ecstasy. Everyone seemed intoxicated with draughts of nectar of the name of Rama which issued from the lips of the Swami. For more than half an hour the tensest stillness prevailed and all sat motionless.

The chanting ended, the Swami sang a song in the same state of God-intoxication. Then the Swami Saradananda followed with the song, "The Hymn of Creation," composed by the Swami, the latter himself playing on the drum. After some favourite songs of Sri Ramakrishna had been sung, the Swami suddenly removed his decorations, put them on Girish Babu after smearing his body with ashes, and covered him with a Geruâ cloth, with the remark, "Paramhansa Deva used to say that G. C. has a little of the Bhairava in him. Aye, there is no difference between him and ourselves." This moved the great dramatist and brought tears to his eyes. When asked by the Swami to speak of Sri Ramakrishna to the assembled devotees, he could only say, after a long silence, with his voice choked with emotion:

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“What shall I say of our all-merciful Lord! His infinite grace I feel in that he has given even an unworthy self like me the privilege of sitting on the same seat with such pure souls as you who have renounced Kâmini-Kâñchana, ‘Lust and Gold,’ even from boyhood!”

After this, the Swami briefly addressed those who had received the sacred thread, asking them to repeat the Gâyatri daily at least one hundred times. In the meantime Swami Akhandananda arrived at the Math from his orphanage in Murshidabad. Referring to him the Swami said, “Look! What a great Karmayogin he is! Without fear, caring neither for life nor for death, how he is working with one-pointed devotion for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many!” This led the Swami to speak at length on Karma Yoga, of how the realisation of the Self could be attained by devotedly working for others without attachment, seeing the Self in all. Then the Swami sang a beautiful song, composed by Girish Babu, “The Infant Ramakrishna” in which, among others, are the lines :

“On the lap of the poor Brâhmana’s spouse  
Who art Thou, O Radiant One, lying?  
Who art Thou, O Digambara (Naked One),  
come to the humble cottage-room?

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Grieved at the world’s sore afflictions  
Hast Thou come with Thy heart bleeding for  
it?”

Among the many distinguished visitors who came to see the Swami at this time, was the Buddhist missionary, the Anagârîka Dharmapâla. He had come to see Mrs. Ole Bull, who was then residing at the old cottage on the recently purchased Math grounds and had stopped first at the monastery

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to ask the Swami to accompany him. The weather was exceedingly inclement. The rain was pouring in torrents. After waiting for an hour the Swami and Mr. Dharmapala with a few others decided to start. The path lay across very uneven and muddy ground, particularly in the compound of the new Math which was being levelled. Drenched with rain, his feet slipping in the mud, the Swami enjoyed himself like a boy, shouting with laughter and merriment. Mr. Dharmapala was the only one who was not barefooted and at one place his foot sank so deep in the mud that he could not extricate himself. The Swami seeing his plight, lent his shoulder for support and putting his arm round his waist helped him out, and both laughing walked linked together the rest of the way.

On arriving at their destination, all went to wash their feet; when the Swami saw Mr. Dharmapala take a pitcher of water, he snatched it from his hand, saying, "You are my guest, and I must have the privilege of serving you!" With these words he was about to wash his feet when there arose a loud protest from Mr. Dharmapala. In India, to wash another's feet is considered an act of the humblest service. All those who witnessed the scene were amazed at the Swami's humility.

Another event of these days was the initiation of Swamis Swarupânanda and Sureshwarânanda into Sannyâs on March 20. It was on his third or fourth visit to the Math that the former was so deeply impressed with the long conversation he had with the Swami, that then and there he decided to give up the world and lead the life of practical spirituality under the Swami's guidance. The friends who had accompanied him were startled when they were asked by him to carry the news that he did not mean to



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return to his home again, a decision to which he rigorously adhered. For several years he had been thinking of the problems of life and death; of how he could break the dream and be of service to the world. Though he had been married in his youth, he had eschewed all marital relations. Living under his parental roof a life of strict Brahmacharya, he was consumed with a burning desire to help his brother man. On meeting the Swami it took him no time to see, as he said in later years, that the opportunities of fructifying his own ideas, which coincided with those of the Swami, would be best afforded by his joining the Order, and he said as much to the Swami, who rejoiced at these words and said to a Gurubhai: "We have made an *acquisition* to-day!" Much later he said to a friend: "To get an efficient worker like Swarupananda is of greater gain than receiving thousands of gold coins." This highly-qualified disciple, contrary to the general rule of the Order, was initiated into Sannyâs after but a few days' stay at the monastery, so great was the Swami's faith in him. Within a few months he was made the editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* magazine, and when the Advaita Ashrama was founded by the Swami in the Himalayas in the early part of the next year, he was made its President, which substantiated his Guru's great confidence in him.

Four days previous to Swami Swarupananda's initiation Miss Margaret Noble took the vow of Brahmacharya at the hands of her Master on a Friday which happened to be the Christian Feast of the Annunciation. She had first met the Swami in London and had regularly attended his classes and had imbibed more and more of that great Vedânta spirit and as a result she had decided to devote her life to the service of India and the Swami's work. She

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was given most appropriately the name of Niveditâ, by which she became widely known both in India and abroad, the name itself meaning, "One who is dedicated." As illustrating a vital point in the Swami's character, and the ideal he put before those whom he made his own, the Sister herself gives to her readers a peep into the nature of the dedication ceremony in these words :

"May one of them never forget a certain day of consecration, in the chapel at the monastery, when, as the opening step in a lifetime, so to speak, he first taught her to perform the worship of Siva, and then made the whole culminate in an offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha! 'Go thou,' he said, as if addressing, in one person each separate soul that would ever come to him for guidance, 'and follow Him who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES, before He attained the vision of the Buddha!'"

This ceremony was in many respects a momentous event, as the Sister was the first Western woman novice received into any monastic order in India. Another event equally significant of the increasing contact, under the guidance of the Swami, between the West and the East, was the receiving of the European lady disciples in audience by the Holy Mother, the spouse of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna, an orthodox lady of the highest rank. The audience was touching. She addressed her visitors, as "My children." Thence they brought back with them to their cottage for a few hours an aged lady, Gopaler Mâ, whom Sri Ramakrishna used to call 'Mother' in a special sense; they won her over, the most orthodox of Brâhmana widows, even to eating with them, and a week later to living with them for three days.

During these days the Swami did not appear before the Calcutta public except on a few occasions. One of them was on March 11, when he presided at a meeting at the Star Theatre, at which the Sister

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Nivedita spoke on "The Influence of Indian Spiritual Thought in England." The Swami spoke briefly on the subject. In introducing the lecturer he spoke of her as "another gift of England to India," the others being Mrs. Besant and Miss Muller, all of whom, he said, had consecrated their lives to the good of India.

When she had finished, the Swami called upon Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Henrietta Muller to say a few words. Miss Muller was hailed with applause when she addressed the audience as "My dear friends and fellow-countrymen," for she said that she and the other Western disciples of the Swami felt in coming to India that they had come to their home, not only of spiritual enlightenment and religious wisdom, but the dwelling-place of their own kindred.

It was in the early part of March when Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod, who had come from America on February 8, took up their residence in the old house on the Belur Math grounds. They had come all the way from America in order to see for themselves the land of their Master's birth, and to come into closer contact with him and his people. Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) had broken off all English associations and had come to India, on January 28, at the call of the Swami, intending to found, conjointly with Miss Henrietta Muller, an institution for the education of Indian women. It was with great pleasure that the Swami received them, and one sees him henceforth making constant efforts to bring about a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Hindu culture in the minds of his Western followers, by definitely training them. This training, however, was not in the long run confined to his Western disciples only, for, through the facile pen of Sister Nivedita, the ideas they received were transmitted to numerous Western

and Eastern readers. Through her writings the more learned and scholarly aspects of the Swami's message to India as a whole were likewise heralded broadcast. Thus, while the Swami was educating the small group of his Western disciples he was at one and the same time speaking to an immense audience. And the ideas which he communicated in these days to his European followers have given tremendous impetus, through Sister Nivedita, to the development of a national consciousness.

While at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house, the Swami was wont to frequent the river-side cottage of his European disciples, even spending hours daily with them. Here under the trees he would reveal to them the deepest secrets of the Indian world, pertaining to its history, its folk-lore, its caste, custom and race. The ideals and realities of Indian religions were interpreted to them in such vivid, poetic and dramatic colours that, "In fact India herself became, as heard in him, as the last and noblest of the Purânas, uttering itself through his lips," though it was true at the same time that whatever the subject of his conversation, "it ended always on the note of the Infinite." He showed no mercy to his Western disciples in their wrong notions and prepossessions with regard to India. He would soften nothing in Hinduism which might at first sight be difficult or repellent to the European mind; he would rather put before them such things in their extreme form, and compel them to enter into their spirit and apprehend their meaning. The most difficult task for the Western disciples was, naturally, the understanding of the Hindu religious ideals and forms of worship, and the Hindu outlook on life. And the Swami would talk for hours, straining his mind and putting his whole heart in his effort to elucidate them. Carried

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on by his burning enthusiasm the Western disciples caught glimpses of the background of the Hindu thought symbols, so strange to them, and learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving, till they became their very own. Truly, in the Swami, East and West were made one. And in the end his Eastern and Western disciples mingled freely in thought and life. But the distance to be travelled was enormous. The process required a tremendous shifting of personality; and for the European disciples to acquire consciously the culture to which the Indian disciples were entitled by birth, necessitated a complete self-re-orientation,—and the presence of a master mind. And the Swami was infinitely patient. He never showed the slightest irritation at interruptions in the flow of his conversation, however frequent and irrelevant they might be, for he knew perfectly well the difficulties.

The training of his Western disciples who came to India was of momentous concern to Swami Vivekananda as a spiritual teacher and as a great Hindu. He knew that a grave responsibility rested upon him. He knew that for them, coming into close contact with the Indian people in their homes, seeing their manners and habits of dress and food and thought, and realising the material disadvantages of the land and its limitations, would be a crucial test of their faith in and regard for the Vedânta and of their power to further fathom the Hinduism he had preached. But he did not know perhaps that the strangest revelation to them was he himself. In the West he was a religious messenger, an apostle of Hinduism, his sole mission being to voice forth the spiritual message, the eternal wisdom of the far past. His only longing was the liberation of mankind from ignorance and the promotion of a brotherly feeling

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between different faiths and nations of the world. In India he was more of a patriot, a worker for the regeneration of his motherland, with all the struggle and torture of a lion caught in a net. Baffled and thwarted, not by the numerous formidable obstacles that lay in his path of fructifying his great purpose, but by the growing consciousness of failing health, even at the moment when his power had reached its height, his heart was prone to despair. But undismayed like a great hero he made superhuman efforts to rise to the occasion. Forced to live a comparatively retired life in the monastery, he put his whole soul to the task of making workers carry out his plans and ideas. And among the Western disciples he particularly chose one in whom he had great hope and trust; as such his illuminating discourses were mainly directed to her. If he had done nothing during this period other than the making of Sister Nivedita, he could not be said to have spent the year in vain.

He regarded the coming to India of his Western disciples as a test, an experiment. But had they all turned against him he would not have for one moment allowed himself to think unkindly of them. Had he not written to Sister Nivedita on the eve of her departure from London, "I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedânta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man." And what father ever loved his children with a greater love than did he his disciples !

Since the arrival of Miss Noble in Calcutta, the idea of training her to be of service to her adopted land seriously exercised the Swami's mind. In his talks at the river-side cottage at Belur with the

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Western disciples he instilled into their minds the Indian consciousness, for he felt that a European who was to work on his behalf for India, must do so absolutely in the Indian way, strictly observing Hindu manners, customs and etiquette even to the minutest detail. Such a one, he demanded, must adopt the food, clothes, language and general habits of the Hindus, and he held up before one of them who was to take charge of the education of Hindu women, the life of Brahmacharya of the orthodox Brâhmana widow as her model, only enlarging the scope of her activities by substituting the selfless service to the Indian people for the loving service to the family. "You have to set yourself," he said to her, "to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brâhmana Brahmachârini's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory." One cannot but acknowledge that such a line of Sâdhanâ was the best means of assimilating that new consciousness which would enable her to grasp the significance of Indian problems. The Swami even insisted that feelings and prejudices that might appear crude, must be reverentially approached and studied, and not blindly ignored and despised. "We shall speak to all men," he said, "in terms of their own orthodoxy!" Of course there were many inconveniences to the Western disciples, often much difficulty, particularly in getting accustomed to Indian diet and Indian manners. Ridiculous blunders were often made, but the Swami would always adjust the difficulty and right the matter.

The Swami was defiant in the defence of the culture of his people. He was ready to beat down

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mercilessly any other than a living interest in everything connected with the people of his land and thundered against anything that sounded like patronising. He would turn upon the Western disciples if they were guilty of stupid criticism. He demanded that they should come to the task of the understanding of India without prepossessions and with sincerity, and that India must be understood in the light of the spiritual vision. He upset any notion they might have had as to his country being either old or effete, and he often said that only a youthful nation could so readily have assimilated the ideals of a foreign culture. He made them see India, in the light of its ideals and ideas, as young, vital and powerful, as one through its religious vision. He made them see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed an unshakable stability and strength. He made them see the *why* of every Indian custom. And they saw that though India was poor, it was clean, and that poverty was honoured in the land where religion was understood to be renunciation, and that here poverty was not necessarily associated with vice, as it is so often in the West. To the Swami all India was sacred and wonderful. And later on as he wandered with his disciples from city to city and province to province, he would recount to them the glories and the beauties of the land. The Swami was anxious that his Western disciples should make an impartial study of Indian problems. They were not only to see the glories, but also to have especially a clear understanding of the problems of the land and bring the ideals and methods of Western scientific culture to bear upon the task of finding a solution.



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Certainly the training of his Western disciples was an arduous task. Often he contrasted the East with the West, showing alternately the advantages and disadvantages of the varied civilisations of the world. In short, he gave them the *spirit* of India and initiated them into its worth and its values.

In order to bind his Western and Eastern disciples together, the Swami would often deliberately perform some act, strikingly unorthodox, before a large number of his people, such as, showing social preference to his Western disciples, by calling them true Brâhmanas and Kshattriyas, eating or drinking after them, or eating in public the food which they had cooked for him, and even making his brother-monks do the same. To oppose long-standing traditions showed the supreme indifference to criticism and the tremendous sincerity of the Swami. His determination was to make all his disciples one in a real and deep brotherhood. In this the Swami truly united, as it were, the ends of the earth, and brought together the most opposite of human temperaments.

It goes without saying that in training his Western disciples in this way the Swami took into consideration the tendencies and aspirations of the pupils, for he knew that to go against them was assuredly to court disastrous results. Moreover, in such matters as these, it was not his nature to interfere with the liberty of the disciples. He would leave them free to observe, to gain their own experience, even at the cost of making mistakes. Sometimes, however, he would impose upon them long periods of severe restraint. "Struggle to realise yourselves," he would say, "without a trace of emotion!" Or in talking of future methods he would say, "Mind! No loaves and fishes! No glamour of the world! All this must be cut out. It must be rooted out. It is

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sentimentality,—the overflow of the senses. It comes to you in colour, sight, sound, and associations. Cut it off. Learn to hate it. It is utter poison !”

The period of the training of the Western disciples of the Swami, which extended over nearly the whole of 1898, is filled with many humorous as well as solemn hours. The training which they received shaped their lives irrevocably, and made them apostles, either in a personal or in a public manner, of the greatness of Hinduism and Hindusthan. Some have passed away; some still live. But all alike have instinctively followed out the passionate request which he made to one who had asked him, “Swamiji, how can I best help you?” His answer was, “LOVE INDIA !”

To what extent the ideals set forth before the Western disciples by the Swami through his inspiring talks and personality translated themselves into living realities, is beautifully expressed by Sister Nivedita herself in the following words which she wrote at the year's end by which time, as we shall see, they had been to Naini Tal and Almora with the Swami:

“Beautiful have been the days of this year. In them the Ideal has become the Real. First in our river-side cottage at Belur; then in the Himalayas, at Naini Tal and Almora; afterwards wandering here and there through Kashmir;—everywhere have come hours never to be forgotten, words that will echo through our lives for ever, and once at least, a glimpse of the Beatific Vision.

“It has been all play.

“We have seen a love that would be one with the humblest and most ignorant, seeing the world for the moment through his eyes, as if criticism were not; we have laughed over the colossal caprice of genius; we have warmed ourselves at heroic fires; and we have been present, as it were, at the awakening of the Holy Child.

“But there has been nothing grim or serious about any of

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these things. Pain has come close to all of us. Solemn anniversaries have been and gone. But sorrow was lifted into a golden light, where it was made radiant, and did not destroy.

"Fain, if I could, would I describe our journeys. Even as I write I see the Irises in bloom at Baramulla; the young rice beneath the poplars at Islamabad; starlight scenes in Himalayan forests; and the royal beauties of Delhi and the Taj. One longs to attempt some memorial of these. It would be worse than useless. Not, then, in words, but in the light of memory, they are enshrined for ever, together with the kindly and gentle folk who dwell among them, and whom we trust always to have left the gladder for our coming.

"We have learnt something of the mood in which new faiths are born, and of the Persons who inspire such faiths. For we have been with one who drew all men to him,—listening to all, feeling with all, and refusing none. We have known a humility that wiped out all littleness, a renunciation that would die for scorn or oppression and pity of the oppressed, a love that would bless even the oncoming feet of torture and of death. We have joined hands with that woman who washed the feet of the Lord with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. We have lacked, not the occasion, but her passionate unconsciousness of self.

"Seated under a tree in the garden of dead emperors there came to us a vision of all the rich and splendid things of Earth, offering themselves as a shrine for the great of soul. The storied windows of cathedrals, and the jewelled thrones of kings, the banners of great captains and the vestments of the priests, the pageants of cities, and the retreats of the proud,—all came, and all were rejected.

"In the garments of the beggar, despised by the alien, worshipped by the people, we have seen him; and only the bread of toil, the shelter of cottage-roofs, and the common road across the cornfields seem real enough for the background to this life. . . . Amongst his own, the ignorant loved him as much as scholars and statesmen. Then boatmen watched the river, in his absence, for his return, and servants disputed with guests to do him service. And through it all, the veil of playfulness was never dropped. 'They played with the Lord,' and instinctively they knew it.

"To those who have known such hours, life is richer and sweeter, and in the long nights even the wind in the palm-trees seems to cry—

" 'Mahâdeva! Mahâdeva! Mahâdeva!' "

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On March 30, the Swami left Calcutta for another sojourn in Darjeeling, as the guest of the family with whom he had lived before. Here he once more allowed himself the fullest freedom, enjoying his rest in every possible way. In so far as he could, he followed the instruction of his physicians not even to think on any serious subject. When he was only partially restored to health, news suddenly reached him of the outbreak of plague in Calcutta. He hastened down to the metropolis so that he might be of help to his people who were terror-stricken with the new plague regulations. The outlook in Calcutta was threatening. It seemed as if a storm were about to burst. The people were running away in panic. The soldiery were called to quell riots. The Swami grasped the gravity of the situation at once. On May 3, the very day of his arrival at the Math, he was seen drafting and writing a plague manifesto in Bengali and in Hindi. He was greatly concerned and wanted to start relief operations immediately to help the afflicted. When a Gurubhai asked him, "Swamiji, where will the funds come from?", he replied with sudden fierceness of decision, "Why? We shall sell the newly-bought Math grounds, if necessary! We are Sannyâsins, we must be ready to sleep under the trees and live on daily Bhikshâ as we did before. What! Should we care for Math and possessions when by disposing of them we could relieve thousands suffering before our eyes!" Fortunately, this extreme step was not necessary, for he soon received promises of ample funds for his immediate work. It was settled that an extensive plot of ground should be rented at once, and in compliance with the Government plague regulations segregation camps be set up, in which plague patients would be accommodated and nursed in such a manner

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that the Hindu community would not be offended. Workers came in numbers to co-operate with his disciples. The Swami instructed them to teach sanitation and themselves clean the lanes and the houses of the districts to which they were sent. The relief which this work rendered to the plague patients was enormous, and the measures adopted by the Swami gave the people confidence. This work endeared him to the public, as they saw that he, indeed, was a practical Vedântin, a teacher who brought to bear the highest metaphysical doctrines of the Vedânta on the relief of want and affliction amongst his fellow-men.

The Swami remained in Calcutta until the possibility of an epidemic had passed away, and the stringent plague regulations were withdrawn. Already plans were being formed to make a journey to the Himalayas with his Western disciples. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who had taken up their residence in Almora, after a tour of India, following upon a long stay at Simla, were writing to the Swami to come. Accordingly, on the night of May 11, a large party left the Howrah Station for Kathgodam, whence the journey was to be made to Almora *via* Naini Tal. In the party were Swami Turiyananda, Niranjanananda, Sadananda and Swarupananda, Mrs. Bull, Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita and Miss Josephine MacLeod. It was Mrs. Patterson who had befriended the Swami once, during the early days of his preaching in America, by taking him into her home when she heard with indignation that he was refused admittance because of his colour to the hotels of the city. Since then she had become a great friend and admirer of the Swami, and when she heard of the proposed journey she at once joined the

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party without caring for the whispered criticism and the probable loss of caste in the official world of Calcutta.

The journey from Calcutta to Naini Tal was throughout most interesting and educative to the Swami's companions. All through the journey the Swami's historic consciousness and love of his country were intensely evident. With passionate enthusiasm he would introduce them one by one to each point of interest as they reached it. As the train passed on and on he related to them the greatness of Patna or Benares, or the splendours of the old Nawab courts of Lucknow, with such ardour and absorption as to create in the minds of his listeners the impression that they were in the presence of one who had lived and moved and had his very being in his country's past. Indeed, there was not one city on which he did not look with tenderness and of whose history he was unaware. When traversing the Terai, he made them feel that this was like the very earth on which the Buddha had passed the days of his youth and renunciation in search of the highest truth. The gorgeous peacocks that now and then flew past, would lend occasion for some graphic account of the invincible Rajputs. The sight of an elephant or a train of camels would bring on a recital of tales of ancient battles or trade, or of the pomp of ancient Rajas or the Moghul court. And then, again, it might be the story of famines and malaria. The long stretches of the plains with their fields, farms and villages would give rise to thoughts concerning the communal system of agriculture, or the beauties of the daily life of the farm housewife, or the hospitality of the poor and humble Indian peasant folk to the Sâdhus. And in the telling of these latter things his eyes would glisten and his voice falter as the memory

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was stirred of his own days as a wanderer on the face of the Indian continent, when his great pleasure had been to reach some village-compound and watch the home-coming of the cows at dusk. The piety of the Hindu on the banks of the Ganges and the piety of the Mussalman kneeling in his prayers, wherever the ordained hour might find him, were to his eyes equally great and uniquely Indian.

And again in word-pictures he would paint his love for the broad rivers, spreading forests and mighty mountains, all of which were such vital elements in the culture of his people. Even the dry-baked soil of the plains, the hot sands of the desert and the dry gravel-beds and stony tracts of many rivers had their message for him. His contact with his Western disciples, who in their zeal hung on every word that fell from his lips, seemed to make the Swami draw from his knowledge and love for India, the most intense poetic description. From history and scene his mind would travel to culture and he might tell them how in India custom and religion are one. The burning-ghat, the thought of a dead body as a thing impure, because cast off by the soul; the eating of food with the right hand and its use in worship and Japa; the nun-like life of the Hindu widow and her fasts, vigils and other rounds of austerities; the respect for parents as incarnate gods; the Varnâsrama Dharma; the appointed hours of religious service and meditation for the Brâhmana caste; the twofold national ideal of renunciation and realisation represented by the Sannyâsin; the temple which each Hindu house is; the idea of the Ishtam; the chanting of the Vedas by the children of the Brâhmanas in the temple court-yards in Benares and in the South; the Mohammedan kneeling in prayer wheresoever the time of prayer

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may find him; the ideas of equality and fraternity practised among the followers of the Prophet;—all these, the Swami would say, made up the culture of his land.

The disciples, hearing these graphic descriptions of the life and soul of his land, as they came in poetic or philosophical glimpses, understood now why he had repeated in his reply to the welcome address in Calcutta that which he had said to an English friend on leaving the West: "India I loved before I came away; now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha."

On the morning of May 13, the journey came to an end and the party reached Naini Tal, the Swami stopping there to see his disciple, the Maharaja of Khetri, then staying in the hills. With great pleasure the Swami introduced the Prince to his European disciples. It was here that he met a Mohammedan gentleman, an Advaita Vedântist at heart, who, struck by his extraordinary spiritual powers and personality, exclaimed: "Swamiji, if in after-times any claim you as an Avatâra, an especial Incarnation of the Godhead,—remember that I, a Mohammedan, am the first!" The gentleman became greatly attached to the Swami, and counted himself thenceforth as one of his disciples under the name of Mohammedananda.

The Swami held several conversations at Naini Tal with distinguished residents; in one of these he spoke especially of the illustrious Raja Ram Mohun Roy, of his breadth of vision and foresight, eloquently emphasising the three dominant notes of this great teacher's message, his acceptance of the Vedânta, his patriotism and his acceptance of the Hindu and the Mohammedan on an equal footing. It might be said



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here that these were also the dominant factors in his own career.

As a striking incident of the ignorance about religion amongst the masses in the West, he related an amusing story. "Once a bishop went to visit a mine. He addressed the labourers and tried to teach them the grand truths of the Bible. In conclusion, he asked, 'Do you know Christ?' One of them responded, 'Well, what is his number?' Poor fellow, he thought that if the bishop would tell him Christ's number, he could find him among the gang of working-men." The Swami continued, "Unlike the Asiatics, the Westerners are not deeply spiritual. Religious thoughts do not permeate the masses. . . . The immorality prevalent amongst Western peoples would strike an Indian visiting London or New York. Hyde Park in London shows in broad daylight scenes which would repel an Asiatic, however degraded he might be."

"The lower classes in the West," he continued, "are not only ignorant of their scriptures and immoral, but are also rude and vulgar. One day as I was passing through the streets of London, in my Eastern garb, the driver of a coal-cart, noticing the strangeness of my dress, hurled a lump of coal at me. Fortunately it passed by my ear without hurting me.

At Naini Tal he met Jogesh Chandra Datta, whom he had known in his school-days at the Metropolitan Institution, and whom he had seen the previous year at Murree. Jogesh Babu proposed to the Swami the advisability of raising funds wherewith to send young graduates to England to compete for the Civil Service, so that on their return they might be of help to India. But the Swami disapproved of the idea: "Nothing of the kind! They would, mostly, turn outlandish in their ideas and prefer to associate,

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on their return, with the Europeans. Of that you may be sure! They would live for themselves and copy European dress, diet, manners and everything else, and forget the cause of their own country." Speaking of the lethargy and apathy of the Indians for the material improvement of their country and their lack of enterprise, especially on industrial lines, he literally wept with pain. The tears running down his face moved the audience deeply. Jogesh Babu writes :

"I shall never forget that scene in my life! He was a Tyâgi, he had renounced the world, and yet India was in the inmost depth of his soul. India was his love, he felt and wept for India, he died for India. India throbbed in his breast, beat in his pulses, in short, was inseparably bound up with his very life. . . ."

From Naini Tal, the Swami went to Almora where with his Gurubhais and Sannyâsin disciples he became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, at Thompson House. His Western disciples took a house near by. It was the Swami's habit, after having risen early and taken a walk with his Gurubhais, to visit the house of Mrs. Bull and her guests, where after joining in their early breakfast, he held conversations for some hours on all conceivable topics. It was here, especially, that Sister Nivedita, who was regarded by this time by the Indian people as the spiritual daughter of the Swami, received her great training at the hands of her Master. It was a training which revealed the greatness of the Master as also the enormous difficulty and struggle which confront the European mind in identifying itself with Indian ideals and Indian culture. Between these two strong personalities a conflict of wills commenced. The Sister's whole mental outlook was aggressively Occidental and intensely English. Consequently,

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almost all along the line of contact between her mind and her Master's, points of distinction were emphasised; and the Swami, because he wanted to infuse into her his own passionate love of India, did not spare her. Concerning this period of trial Sister Nivedita speaking of herself writes many years later as follows:

“But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this; never the dictating of opinion or creed; never more than emancipation from partiality. Even at the end of the terrible experience, when this method, as regarded race and country, was renounced, never to be taken up systematically again, the Swami did not call for any confession of faith, any declaration of new opinion. He dropped the whole question. His listener went free. But he had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her to rest, until later, by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments stood rationalised and accounted for. . . . But at the time they were a veritable lion in the path, and remained so until she had grasped the folly of allowing anything whatever to obscure to her the personality that was here revealing itself. . . . In every case it had been some ideal of the past that had raised a barrier to the movement of her sympathy, and surely it is always so. It is the worships of one era which forge the fetters of the next.

“These morning talks at Almora then, took the form of assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic, or of long comparisons of Indian and European history and sentiments, often containing extended observations of very great value. One characteristic of the Swami was the habit of attacking the abuses of a country or society openly and vigorously when he was in its midst, whereas after he had left it, it would often seem as if nothing but its virtues were remembered by him. He was always testing his disciples, and the manner of these particular discourses was probably adopted in order to put to the proof the courage and sincerity of one who was both woman and European.”

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His intellectual conflict with the Sister resulted day after day in a gradual Hinduising, or better said, Indianising of her mind. He, however, admired this hesitation on her part in accepting foreign ideas; and once, he comforted her with the remark that in his own case he had had a similar fight with his own Master before accepting his.

How this constant clash and conflict of sentiments came to an end in peace, may be best told here in the language of the Sister herself:

“And then a time came when one of the older ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however, he returned, and finding us together in the Verandah, he turned to her and said, with the simplicity of a child, ‘You were right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace.’ Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exaltation came into his voice as he said, ‘See! The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!’ As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. . . . It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments. And I have told its story, only that I may touch upon its sequel. Long, long ago, Sri Ramakrishna had told his disciples that the day would come when his beloved ‘Naren’ would manifest his own great gift of bestowing knowledge with a touch. That evening at Almora, I proved the truth of this prophecy. For alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite Good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me. I learnt, too, on the physical plane, the simple everyday reality of the experience related in the Hindu books on religious psychology. And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation, only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place.”

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The Swami's discussions and teachings of these days that are recorded, though meant for his European disciples especially, were of great value to his own countrymen. His thought touched all angles of vision, and through him were made visible vital aspects of human wisdom in the light of the Supreme Realisation. Some of these morning talks at Almora have been recorded by Sister Nivedita in her charming little book, "Notes of Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda," from which we cannot do better than quote the following extracts, which though lengthy will be found most interesting and instructive:

"The first morning, the talk was that of the central ideals of civilisation,—in the West, truth, in the East, chastity. He justified Hindu marriage-customs, as springing from the pursuit of this ideal, and from the woman's need of protection, in combination. And he traced out the relation of the whole subject to the Philosophy of the Absolute.

"Another morning he began by observing that as there were four main castes,—Brâhman, Kshattriya, Bunea, Sudra,—so there were four great national functions, the religious or priestly, fulfilled by the Hindus; the military, by the Roman Empire; the mercantile, by England today; and the democratic, by America in the future. And here he launched off into a glowing prophetic forecast of how America would yet solve the problems of the Sudra,—the problems of freedom and co-operation,—and turned to relate to a non-American listener, the generosity of the arrangements which that people had attempted to make for their aborigines.

"Again, it would be an eager *rêsumé* of the history of India or of the Moguls whose greatness never wearied him. Every now and then, throughout the summer, he would break out into descriptions of Delhi, and Agra. Once he described the Taj as 'a dimness, and again a dimness, and there—a grave!' Another time, he spoke of Shah Jehan, and then, with a burst of enthusiasm,—Ah! *He* was the glory of his line! A feeling for, and discrimination of beauty that are unparalleled in history. And an artist himself! I have seen a manuscript illuminated by him, which is one of the art-treasures of India. What a genius!' Oftener still, it was

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Akbar of whom he would tell, almost with tears in his voice, and a passion easier to understand, beside that undomed tomb, open to sun and wind, the grave of Secundra at Agra.

"But all the more universal forms of human feeling were open to the Master. In one mood he talked of China as if she were the treasure-house of the world, and told us of the thrill with which he saw inscriptions in old Bengali (Kutil?) characters, over the doors of Chinese temples. Few things could be more eloquent of the vagueness of Western ideas regarding Oriental peoples than the fact that one of his listeners alleged untruthfulness as a notorious quality of that race. As a matter of fact the Chinese are famous in the United States, where they are known as businessmen, for their remarkable commercial integrity, developed to a point far beyond that of the Western requirement of the written word. So the objection was an instance of misrepresentation, which, though disgraceful, is nevertheless too common. But in any case the Swami would have none of it. Untruthfulness! Social rigidity! What were these, except very, very relative terms? And as to untruthfulness in particular, could commercial life, or social life, or any other form of co-operation go on for a day, if men did not trust men? Untruthfulness as a necessity of etiquette? And how was that different from the Western idea? Is the Englishman always glad and always sorry at the proper place? But there is still a difference of degree? Perhaps—but only of degree!

"Or he might wander as far afield as Italy, 'greatest of the countries of Europe, land of religion and of art; alike of imperial organisation and of Mazzini;—mother of ideas, of culture, and of freedom!'

"One day it was Sivaji and the Mahrattas and the year's wanderings as a Sannyâsi, that won him home to Raigarh. 'And to this day,' said the Swami, 'authority in India dreads the Sannyâsi, lest he conceals beneath his yellow garb another Sivaji.'

"Often the enquiry, Who and what are the Aryans?—absorbed his attention; and, holding that their origin was complex, he would tell us how in Switzerland he had felt himself to be in China, so alike were the types. He believed too that the same was true of some parts of Norway. Then there were scraps of information about countries and physiognomies, an impassioned tale of the Hungarian scholar, who traced the Huns to Tibet, and lies buried in Darjeeling and so on. . . .

"Sometimes the Swami would deal with the rift between

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Brâhmans and Kshattriyas, painting the whole history of India as a struggle between the two, and showing that the latter had always embodied the rising, fetter-destroying impulses of the nation. He could give excellent reason too for the faith that was in him that the Kayasthas of modern Bengal represented the pre-Mauryan Kshattriyas. He would portray the two opposing types of culture, the one classical, intensive, and saturated with an ever-deepening sense of tradition and custom; the other, defiant, impulsive, and liberal in its outlook. It was part of a deep-lying law of the historic development that Rama, Krishna, and Buddha had all arisen in the kingly, and not in the priestly caste. And in this paradoxical moment, Buddhism was reduced to a caste-smashing formula—'a religion invented by the Kshattriyas as a crushing rejoinder to Brâhmanism!

"That was a great hour indeed, when he spoke of Buddha; for, catching a word that seemed to identify him with its anti-Brâhmanical spirit, an uncomprehending listener said, 'Why, Swami, I did not know that you were a Buddhist!' 'Madam,' he said rounding on her, his whole face aglow with the inspiration of that name, 'I am the servant of the servants of the servants of Buddha. Who was there ever like Him?—the Lord—who never performed one action for Himself—with a heart that embraced the whole world! So full of pity that He—prince and monk—would give His life to save a little goat! So loving that He sacrificed Himself to the hunger of a tigress!—to the hospitality of a pariah and blessed him! And He came into my room when I was a boy and I fell at His feet! For I knew it was the Lord Himself!'

"Many times he spoke of Buddha in this fashion, sometimes at Belur and sometimes afterwards. And once he told us the story of Ambâpâli, the beautiful courtesan who feasted Him, in words that recalled the revolt of Rossetti's great half-sonnet of Mary Magdalene:—

'Oh loose me! Seest thou not my Bridegroom's face,  
That draws me to Him? For His feet my kiss,  
My hair, my tears, He craves today:—And oh!  
What words can tell what other day and place  
Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His?  
He needs me, calls me, loves me, let me go!'

"But national feeling did not have it all its own way. For one morning when the chasm seemed to be widest, there was a long talk on Bhakti—that perfect identity with the Beloved that the devotion of Râya Râmânanda, the Bengali nobleman

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who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, so beautifully illustrates :

‘Four eyes met. There were changes in two souls.

And now I cannot remember whether he is a man

And I a woman, or he a woman and I a man!

All I know is, there were two, Love came, and there  
is one!’

“It was that same morning that he talked of the Babists of Persia,—in their era of martyrdom—of the woman who inspired and the man who worshipped and worked. And doubtless then he expatiated on that theory of his—somewhat quaint and surprising to unaccustomed minds, not so much for the matter of the statement, as for the explicitness of the expression,—of the greatness and goodness of the young, who can love without seeking personal expression for their love, and their high potentiality.

“Another day coming at sunrise when the snows could be seen, dawn-lighted, from the garden, it was Siva and Uma on whom he dwelt,—and that was Siva, up there, the white snow-peaks, and the light that fell upon Him was the Mother of the World! For a thought on which at this time he was dwelling much was that God *is* the Universe,—not within it, or outside it, and not the universe God or the image of God—but He it, and the All.

“Sometimes all through the summer he would sit for hours telling us stories, those cradle-tales of Hinduism, whose function is not at all that of our nursery fictions, but much more, like the man-making myths of the old Hellenic world. Best of all these I thought was the story of Suka, and we looked on the Siva-mountains and the bleak scenery of Almora the evening we heard it for the first time.

“Suka, the typical Paramahamsa, refused to be born for fifteen years, because he knew that his birth would mean his mother’s death. Then his father appealed to Umâ, the Divine Mother. She was perpetually tearing down the veil of Mâyâ before the hidden Saint, and Vyâsa pleaded that She should cease this, or his son would never come to birth. Uma consented, for one moment only, and that moment the child was born. He came forth a young man sixteen years of age, unclothed, and went straight forward, knowing neither his father nor his mother, straight on, followed by Vyasa. Then, coming round a mountain-pass his body melted away from him, because it was no different from the universe, and his father following and crying, ‘Oh my son! Oh my son!’ was answered



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only by the echo, 'Om! Om! Om!'—among the rocks. Then Suka resumed his body, and came to his father to get knowledge from him. But Vyasa found that he had none for him, and sent him to Janaka, king of Mithilâ, the father of Sitâ, if perchance he might have some to give. Three days he sat outside the royal gates, unheeded, without a change of expression or of look. The fourth day he was suddenly admitted to the king's presence with *eclat*. Still there was no change.

"Then as a test, the powerful sage who was the king's prime minister translated himself into a beautiful woman, so beautiful that every one present had to turn away from the sight of her, and none dared speak. But Suka went up to her and drew her to sit beside him on his mat, while he talked to her of God.

"Then the minister turned to Janaka saying, 'Know, O King, if you seek the greatest man on earth, this is he!'

"There is little more told of the life of Suka. He is the ideal Paramahansa. To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that One Undivided Ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of It. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss!'

"Suka was indeed the Swami's saint. He was the type, to him, of that highest realisation to which life and the world are merely play. Long after, we learned how Sri Ramakrishna had spoken of him in his boyhood as, 'My Suka.' And never can I forget the look, as of one gazing far into depths of joy, with which he once stood and quoted the words of Siva, in praise of the deep spiritual significance of the Bhagavad-Gitâ, and of the greatness of Suka—'I know (the real meaning of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gitâ), and Suka knows, and *perhaps* Vyâsa knows—a little!'

"Another day in Almora the Swami talked of the great humanising lives that had arisen in Bengal, at the long inrolling wash of the first wave of modern consciousness on the ancient shores of Hindu culture. Of Ram Mohun Roy we had already heard from him at Naini Tal. And now of the Pundit Vidyâsâgar he exclaimed, 'There is not a man of my age in Northern India, on whom his shadow has not fallen!' It was a great joy to him to remember that these men and Sri Ramakrishna had all been born within a few miles of each other.

"The Swami introduced Vidyâsâgar to us now as 'the hero of widow remarriage, and of the abolition of polygamy.' But

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his favourite story about him was of that day when he went home from the Legislative Council, pondering over the question of whether or not to adopt English dress on such occasions. Suddenly some one came up to a fat Mogul who was proceeding homewards in leisurely and pompous fashion, in front of him, with the news, 'Sir, your house is on fire!' The Mogul went neither faster nor slower for this information, and presently the messenger contrived to express a discreet astonishment, whereupon his master turned on him angrily. 'Wretch!' he said, 'Am I to abandon the gait of my ancestors, because a few sticks happen to be burning?' And Vidyāsāgar, walking behind, determined to stick to the chudder, dhoti and sandals, not even adopting coat and slippers.

"The picture of Vidyāsāgar going into retreat for a month for the study of the Sāstras, when his mother had suggested to him the remarriage of child-widows, was very forcible. 'He came out of his retirement of opinion that they were *not* against such remarriage, and he obtained the signatures of the Pundits that they agreed in this opinion. Then the action of certain native princes led the Pundits to abandon their own signatures, so that, had the Government not determined to assist the movement, it could not have been carried—'and now,' added the Swami, 'the difficulty has an economic rather than a social basis.'

"We could believe that a man who was able to discredit polygamy by moral force alone, was 'intensely spiritual.' And it was wonderful indeed to realise the Indian indifference to a formal creed, when we heard how this giant was driven by the famine of 1864,—when 140,000 people died of hunger and disease,—to have nothing more to do with God, and become entirely agnostic in thought.

"With this man, as one of the educators of Bengal, the Swami coupled the name of David Hare, the old Scotsman and atheist to whom the clergy of Calcutta refused Christian burial. He had died of nursing an old pupil through cholera. So his own boys carried his dead body and buried it in a swamp, and made the grave a place of pilgrimage. That place has now become College Square, the educational centre, and his school is now within the University. And to this day, Calcutta students make pilgrimage to the tomb.

"On this day we took advantage of the natural turn of the conversation to cross-question the Swami as to the possible influence that Christianity might have exerted over himself. He was much amused to hear that such a statement had been

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hazarded, and told us with much pride of his only contact with missionary influences, in the person of his old Scotch master, Mr. Hastie. This hot-headed old man lived on nothing, and regarded his room as his boys' home as much as his own. It was he who had first sent the Swami to Sri Ramakrishna, and towards the end of his stay in India he used to say, 'Yes, my boy, you were right, you were right!—It is true that all is God!' 'I am *proud* of him!'—cried the Swami, 'but I don't think you could say that he had Christianised me much!' It appeared, indeed, that he had only been his pupil for some six months, having attended college so irregularly that the Presidency College refused to send him up for his degree, though he undertook to pass.

"We heard charming stories, too, on less serious subjects. There was the lodging-house in an American city, for instance, where he had had to cook his own food, and where he would meet, in the course of operations, 'an actress who ate roast turkey everyday, and a husband and wife who lived by making ghosts.' And when the Swami remonstrated with the husband, and tried to persuade him to give up deceiving people, saying 'You *ought* not to do this!' the wife would come up behind, and say eagerly 'Yes Sir! That's just what I tell him; for *he* makes all the ghosts, and Mrs. Williams takes all the money!'

"He told us also of a young engineer, an educated man, who, at a spiritualistic gathering, when the fat Mrs. Williams appeared from behind the screen as his thin mother, exclaimed 'Mother dear, how you *have* grown in the spirit-world!'

"'At this,' said the Swami, 'my heart broke, for I thought there could be no hope for the man.' But never at a loss, he told the story of a Russian painter, who was ordered to paint the picture of a peasant's dead father, the only description given being, 'Man! Don't I tell you he had a wart on his nose?' When at last, therefore, the painter had made a portrait of some stray peasant, and affixed a large wart to the nose, the picture was declared to be ready, and the son was told to come and see it. He stood in front of it, greatly overcome, and said, 'Father! Father! How changed you are since I saw you last!' After this, the young engineer would never speak to the Swami again, which showed at least that he could see the point of a story. But at this, the Hindu monk was genuinely astonished. . . .

"June 9th. This Thursday morning there was a talk on Krishna. It was characteristic of the Swami's mind, and characteristic also of the Hindu culture from which he had

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sprung, that he could lend himself to the enjoyment and portrayal of an idea one day, that the next would see submitted to a pitiless analysis and left slain upon the field. He was a sharer to the full in the belief of his people that, provided an idea was spiritually true and consistent, it mattered very little about its objective actuality. And this mode of thought had first been suggested to him, in his boyhood, by his own Master. He had mentioned some doubt as to the authenticity of a certain religious history. 'What!' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'do you not then think those who could conceive such ideas must have been the thing itself?'

"The existence of Krishna, then, like that of Christ, he often told us, 'in the general way' he doubted. Buddha and Mohammed alone, amongst religious teachers, had been fortunate enough to have 'enemies as well as friends,' so that their historical careers were beyond dispute. As for Krishna, he was the most shadowy of all. 'A poet, a cowherd, a great ruler, a warrior, and a sage had all perhaps been merged in one beautiful figure, holding the Gitâ in his hand.'

"But today, Krishna was 'the most perfect of the Avatârs.' And a wonderful picture followed, of the charioteer who reined in his horses, while he surveyed the field of battle and in one brief glance noted the disposition of the forces, at the same moment that he commenced to utter to his royal pupil the deep spiritual truths of the Gitâ.

" . . . And the Swami was fond of a statement, . . . . . that the Krishna-worshippers of India had exhausted the possibilities of the romantic motive in lyric poetry.

"June 10th. It was our last afternoon at Almora that we heard the story of the fatal illness of Sri Ramakrishna. Dr. Mohendra Lall Sirkar had been called in, and had pronounced the disease to be cancer of the throat, leaving the young disciples with many warnings as to its infectious nature. Half an hour later, 'Naren,' as he then was, came in and found them huddled together, discussing the dangers of the case. He listened to what they had been told, and then, looking down, saw at his feet the cup of gruel that had been partly taken by Sri Ramakrishna and which must have contained in it, the germs of the fatal discharges of mucus and pus, as it came out in his baffled attempts to swallow the thing, on account of the stricture of the food-passage in the throat. He picked it up, and drank from it, before them all. Never was the infection of cancer mentioned amongst the disciples again."

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While at Almora the Swami met numerous residents of the place and distinguished persons from other parts of India, who had come up there to spend the summer months, and them all he instructed in the Dharma. During this time also, he met Mrs. Annie Besant, twice; she was then the guest of Mr. G. N. Chakravarti. The first meeting took place at the house of the latter whose wife invited the Swami, who was known to her from the days of her girlhood. Shortly after, Mrs. Besant was invited to tea in his host's house to meet the Swami, and with her, on both the occasions, he had long and pleasant conversations.

Though full of fun at times, the Swami often spoke of the torture of life, and would enter into moods of meditation. A strange longing for quiet obsessed him and on Wednesday, May 25, he left the circle of friends and disciples and retired to Siyâdevi, some distance from Almora. There he was in the silence of the forests for ten hours each day, but he found on returning to his tent in the evenings that crowds followed him even there, so he returned on Saturday. But he was radiant, for he had proved to himself that he could be again "the old-time Sannyâsin, able to go barefoot, and endure heat, cold, and scanty fare, unspoilt by the West." On the following Monday, May 30, the Swami accompanied by his host and hostess left Almora for a week, partly in search of seclusion, and partly on business, in connection with a possible purchase of an estate for his monastery, which however, fell through.

When he returned on Sunday evening, June 5, it was to receive two terrible shocks,—the news of the death of Pavhari Baba, whom he loved, as he had said once, "second only to Sri Ramakrishna," and the death of his dear disciple, Mr. Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin, who was last heard of with Miss Muller in

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Almora, had gone to Madras, where he had accepted an offer to join the staff of the '*Madras Mail*'. He died on June 2, at Ootacamund, of enteric fever. The sad news was not broken to him till the next morning, when he came early to Mrs. Bull's Bungalow. He took his loss calmly, sat down and chatted quietly with his Western disciples. That morning he was full of Bhakti passing through asceticism far out of the reach of the sweet snares of personality.

“ ‘What is this idea of Bhakti without renunciation?’ he said. ‘It is most pernicious!’ And standing there for an hour or more, he talked of the awful self-discipline that one must impose on oneself, if one would indeed be unattached, of the requisite nakedness of selfish motives, and of the danger that at any moment the most flowerlike soul might have its petals soiled with the grosser stains of life. He told the story of an Indian nun who was asked when a man could be certain of safety on this road, and who sent back, for answer, a little plate of ashes. For the fight against passion was long and fierce, and at any moment the conqueror might become the conquered.

“And as he talked, it seemed that this banner of renunciation was the flag of a great victory, that poverty and self-mastery were the only fit raiment for the soul that would wed the Eternal Bridegroom, and that life was a long opportunity for giving, and the thing not taken away from us was to be mourned as lost. . . .”

But the Swami's tender heart was sorely afflicted by the loss of a loving disciple who had served him so many years with the warmest devotion. As hours passed by, he “complained of the weakness that brought the image of his most faithful disciple constantly to his mind. It was no more manly, he protested, to be thus ridden by one's memory, than to retain the characteristics of the fish or the dog. Man must conquer this illusion, and know that the dead are here beside us and with us, as much as ever. It is their absence and separation that are a myth. And then he would break out again with some bitter utter-

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ance against the folly of imagining Personal Will to guide the universe. 'As if,' he exclaimed, 'it would not be one's right and duty to fight such a God and slay Him, for killing Goodwin!—And Goodwin, if he had lived, could have done so much!' And in India one was free to recognise this as the most religious, because the most unflinchingly truthful, mood of all!"

He took away a few faulty lines of someone's writing and brought back a beautiful little poem, "*Requiescat in Pace*," in which nothing of the original was left. This was sent to the widowed mother, as his memorial of her son. And of him he also wrote:

"The debt of gratitude I owe him can never be repaid, and those who think they have been helped by any thought of mine, ought to know that almost every word of it was published through the untiring and most unselfish exertions of Mr. Goodwin. In him I have lost a friend true as steel, a disciple of never-failing devotion, a worker who knew not what tiring was, and the world is less rich by one of those few who are born, as it were, to live only for others."

The Swami grew restless and impatient and yearned to be away and alone. He could no longer bear to remain in that place where the news of his great sorrow had reached him, where letters had to be written and received constantly, keeping his wound open. It was decided to spend some time in Kashmir. Therefore on June 11, he with only the women disciples who had accompanied him from Calcutta left Almora for Kashmir, as guests of Mrs. Ole Bull.

Before describing his travels in the immediate future, a fact of supreme import both to the Swami himself and to his mission must be mentioned. While in Almora he had arranged with Mr. and Mrs.

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Sevier and Swami Swarupananda to revive the defunct magazine, *Prabuddha Bharata*, the editor of which, B. R. Rajam Iyer, a gifted young man of twenty-six, a real Vedântin and an ardent admirer of the Swami, had just passed away. The Swami had always a special affection for this paper financed and managed by his Madrasi disciples. Coming up to Almora, as also many a time before, he had spoken of his intention to start papers in English and in the vernaculars to be conducted by his brother-monks and disciples, as he felt more and more their need and value,—in common with public preaching, monastic centres and Homes of Service,—in giving Modern India his Master's gospel as well as his own message. He had even once thought of bringing out a daily paper. However, he left for Kashmir with the satisfaction of knowing that the *Prabuddha Bharata* or "Awakened India" was to be transferred to Almora, as soon as the necessary arrangements were completed, with Swami Swarupananda as editor and Mr. Sevier as manager. The latter also came forward with an offer to meet all preliminary costs of purchasing and of bringing up the hand-press, type, paper and other necessary materials. Reaching Srinagar the Swami eagerly awaited the appearance of the first number of the magazine. And he sent an inspiring poem of invocation, "To the Awakened India," charging it to wake up once more and resume its march "for working wonders new," "till Truth, bare Truth in all its glory shines!"

Before taking the formal leave of the various activities of the Swami at Almora it will be interesting to give the reminiscences of an interview he had with Aswini Kumar Datta, the saintly patriot of Bengal.



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It was some time in May or June in 1897. The Swami was staying at Almora with Capt. and Mrs. Sevier as their guest. Aswini Babu also came to that town in the course of travel. He learned one day from his cook of the presence of a strange Bengali Sadhu in the town, who spoke English, rode horses and moved altogether in a lordly style. He had learnt from the papers that the Swami was then staying at Almora, and therefore had no difficulty in identifying the strange Sâdhu as the warrior-monk Vivekananda. Aswini Babu went out to meet the "Hindu Warrior." Nobody could give him the address of "Swami Vivekananda." But when he enquired about the "Bengali Sâdhu," a passer-by said, "You mean the riding Sâdhu? There he is coming on horseback! That is his house, sir." Aswini Babu saw from a distance that as soon as the ochre-robed Sannyâsin reached the bungalow-gate, an Englishman came and led the horse to the door, where the Swami dismounted and went in.

A while after, Aswini Babu went in and enquired at the door, "Is Naren Datta here?" A young monk answered in disgust, "No sir, there is no Naren Datta here. He died long ago. There is only Swami Vivekananda." But Aswini Babu said he did not want Swami Vivekananda, but Paramahansa Dev's Narendra. This conversation reached the Swami's ears, and he sent for the disciple and enquired what the matter was. The young monk said, "A gentleman is enquiring about Naren Datta,—Paramahansa's Narendra. I told him that he had died long ago, but he might see Swami Vivekananda." The Swami exclaimed, "Oh what have you done! Just show him in." Aswini Babu was accordingly called in and found the Swami seated on an easy chair. On seeing Aswini Babu, the Swami stood up and greeted

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him cordially. Aswini Babu said, "The Master had once asked me to speak to his dear Narendra. But Narendra could not speak with me much on that occasion. Fourteen years have passed by, I meet him again. The Master's words cannot be in vain." The Swami sincerely regretted not having been able to have a long talk with him on the first occasion. This astonished Aswini Babu, for he had scarcely expected that the Swami would remember him and a few minutes' conversation held so long ago. The Swami's memory astounded him.

When Aswini Babu addressed him as "Swamiji," he interrupted him, saying, "How is that? When did I become a 'Swami' to you? I am still the same Narendra. The name by which I used to be called by the Master is to me a priceless treasure. Call me by that name."

Aswini Babu: "You have travelled over the world and inspired millions of hearts with spirituality. Can you tell me which way lies India's salvation?"

Swamiji: "I have nothing more to tell you than what you heard from the Master,—that religion is the very essence of our being, and all reforms must come through it to be acceptable to the masses. To do otherwise is as improbable as pushing the Ganges back to its source in the Himalayas and making it flow in a new channel."

A: "But have you no faith in what Congress is doing?"

S: "No, I have not.<sup>1</sup> But, of course, something is better than nothing, and it is good to push the sleeping nation from all sides to wake it up. Can you tell me what Congress has been doing for the

<sup>1</sup> The Swami here speaks of the Congress of those days, which hardly had any touch with the masses, being confined to the educated few.

## TRAINING OF DISCIPLES

masses? Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring you freedom? I have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first. Let them have full means, and they will work out their own salvation. If Congress does anything for them, it has my sympathy. The virtues of Englishmen should also be assimilated."

A: "Is it any particular creed you mean by 'religion'?"

S: "Did the Master preach any particular creed? But he has spoken of the Vedânta as an all-comprehensive and synthetic religion. I also therefore preach it. But the essence of my religion is strength. The religion that does not infuse strength into the heart, is no religion to me, be it of the Upanishads, the Gita or the Bhâgavatam. Strength is religion, and nothing is greater than strength."

A: "Please tell me what I should do."

S: "I understand you are engaged in some educational work. That is real work. A great power is working in you, and the gift of knowledge is a great one. But see that a man-making education spreads among the masses. The next thing is the building up of character. Make your students' character as strong as the thunderbolt. Of the bones of the Bengali youths shall be made the thunderbolt that shall destroy India's thralldom. Can you give me a few fit boys? A nice shake I can give to the world then.

"And wherever you hear the Râdhâ-Krishna songs going on, use the whip right and left. The whole nation is going to rack and ruin! People having no self-control indulging in such songs! Even the slightest impurity is a great hindrance to the conception of these high ideals. Is it a joke? We have long sung and danced,—no harm if there

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is a lull for a time. In the meanwhile let the country wax strong.

“And go to the untouchables, the cobblers, the sweepers and others of their kind, and tell them, ‘You are the soul of the nation, and in you lies infinite energy which can revolutionise the world. Stand up, shake off your shackles, and the whole world shall wonder at you.’ Go and found schools among them, and invest them with the ‘sacred thread.’”

It being the Swami’s breakfast hour, Aswini Babu rose to take leave. But before going, he asked the Swami, “Is it true that when the Madras Brâhmins called you a Sudra having no right to preach the Vedas, you said, ‘If I am a Sudra, ye the Brâhmins of Madras are the Pariah of the Pariahs?’”

S: “Yes.”

A: “Was it becoming of you, a religious teacher and a man of self-control, to retort like that?”

S: “Who says so? I never said I was right. The impudence of these people made me lose my temper, and the words came out. What could I do? But I do not justify them.”

At this, Aswini Babu embraced the Swami and said, “Today you rise higher than ever in my estimation. Now I realise why you are a world-conqueror and why the Master loved you so much!”

## XXXII

### IN KASHMIR: AMARNATH AND KSHIRBHAVANI

The journey from Almora down to the plains through the hills covered with almost tropical forests was delightful. On the way the Swami pointed out a certain hill-side inhabited, so legend holds, by a race of centaurs and he told of his own experience of once having actually seen such a phantom there before hearing the folk-tale. On June 12, the party rested above the beautiful lake, Bhim Tal. In his talks in the afternoon with his companions, the Swami translated some of the most charming Vedic verses, and songs of Soordâs and other poet-devotees, in his intense and poetic way intoning every line in the original before giving its English form. The Rudra-prayer was thus rendered by him:

“From the unreal lead us to the Real.  
From darkness lead us unto Light.  
From death lead us to Immortality.  
Reach us through and through our self.  
And evermore protect us—Oh Thou Terrible!—  
From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face.”

And then the psalm of invocation of peace and benediction:

“The blissful winds are sweet to us.  
The seas are showering bliss on us.  
May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us.  
May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us.  
May the cattle give us bliss.  
O Father in Heaven, be Thou blissful unto us!  
The very dust of the earth is full of bliss.  
It is all bliss—all bliss—all bliss.”

## LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The next day the Pine and Deodar forests and the hills were left behind for the Punjab.

On reaching Rawalpindi, the party drove by Tongâ to Murree, where they stayed for three days, and thence, partly by Tonga and partly by boat, they made their way to Srinagar, arriving there June 22. On the way, from Kohala to Bara-mulla, the Swami, in the course of his instructions to his companions, spoke frankly of the modern abuses of Hinduism, and uncompromisingly denounced the evil practices known as Vâmâchâra, prevalent in the name of religion, in the land. This is mentioned because it reveals that the Swami could see the faults as well as the virtues of his motherland, and that he kept nothing back from his Western disciples in his instructions concerning India telling them the worst things that might be said against his people and their creeds as well as the best. And he could denounce when denunciation was imperative.

On June 19, passing through the valley of the Jhelum, the Swami was in a reminiscent mood. Speaking of Brahmayidyâ, the path of realisation of the One Absolute, and of how love conquers all evil, he related the story of one of his class-mates, who subsequently became a rich man. He was suffering from an obscure disease which baffled the skill of the doctors. Naturally, he lost hope of recovery and interest in life in general, and turned to religion and thoughts of Vairâgyam, as men do in such a case. Hearing that the Swami had become a religious man and an adept in Yoga he sent for him, begging him to come if only for once, which he did. As the Swami sat at his bedside, there came to him the Upanishadic Sloka—"Him the Brâhmana conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the Brâhmana. Him the Kshattriya conquers, who thinks that he is separate

from the Kshattriya and him the universe conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the universe." Curiously, this acted like a charm on the sick man and the effect was miraculous. He grasped the theme even with the repeating of the Sloka, felt strength in the body as he had not done for a long time, and made a quick recovery! "And so," said the Swami, "though I often say strange things and angry things, yet remember that in my heart I never seriously mean to preach anything but love! All these things will come right, if only we realise that we love each other."

The readers will remember the fascination the Great God Siva had for the Swami during his childhood. As he grew older his love for Siva deepened and now being in the Himalayas, the abode of the Lord of monks and Yogis, the thought of Him was uppermost in his mind. To his disciples he would speak of the Paurânic conception of the oneness of Siva and His consort, Umâ, under the guise of half-man and half-woman, representing the junction of two great streams of thought, Monasticism and Mother-worship, or the vision of truth inseparable from renunciation and love supreme. And "he understood, he said, for the first time this summer, the meaning of the nature-story that made the Ganges fall on the head of the Great God, and wander in and out amongst His matted locks, before she found an outlet on the plains below. He had searched long, he said, for the words that the rivers and waterfalls uttered, amongst the mountains, before he had realised that it was the eternal cry 'Byom! Byom! Hara! Hara!' 'Yes!' he said of Siva one day, 'He is the Great God, calm, beautiful, and silent! and I am His great worshipper.'"

At Baramulla, and as the party entered further

## LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

into Kashmir, the Swami's mind was filled with the legends with which the Kashmiris have peopled the cathedral rocks, the many ruins and the winding passes. From a scenic point of view alone, the journey was intensely fascinating. Groups of singing peasants, or pious pilgrims and monks wending their way on foot through tortuous paths to the sacred shrines, the Irises in bloom on every hill-side, the green fields, the beautiful valleys ringed round with snow-clad mountains, and the poplars in the neighbourhood of Islamabad and the immense Chennaar trees to be seen everywhere, were in themselves pictures never to be forgotten.

No matter where he travelled, whether it was in the East or in the West, the Swami tried to identify himself with the habits of the people. So here in Kashmir one sees him drinking Kashmiri tea from a *samovar* and eating the jam of the country after the fashion of the people.

As the Swami had brought no attendants with him, he had to look after every little detail himself and to make all the necessary arrangements on the way for the comfort of the party, and these offices he performed with the keenest pleasure. Arriving at Baramulla on the twentieth, the party started in three *Dungâs*, or house-boats, at about four o'clock in the afternoon for Srinagar, which they reached on the third day. On the next day of their trip far up the river Jhelum, when the boats were moored near a village, the Swami took his companions out for a long walk across the fields and turned into a neighbouring farm-yard with a view to introduce them to a woman, of whose faith and pride he had spoken not only to themselves and others in private talks but even in one of his speeches in Calcutta a few months before. In that farm-yard they found seated



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under a tree a handsome elderly woman spinning wool, while round her, helping her, were her two daughters-in-law and their children. The Swami had called at this farm last year to beg for a glass of water, and after drinking had asked her in a mild tone, "And what religion is yours, mother?" "Thank God, sir," the woman had said with triumph in her voice, "by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussulman!" The Swami was on the present occasion warmly welcomed by the whole family and every courtesy was shown to his friends.

In one of these walks Sister Nivedita complained to the Swami of the abandonment of feeling which she had seen in Kalighat. "Why do they kiss the ground before the image?" she asked. The Swami became very quiet and then said, "Is it not the same thing to kiss the ground before that image as to kiss the ground before these mountains?"

The entire time spent in the Durgās on the river Jhelum in and about Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, (from June 21 to July 25), was an unparalleled educational opportunity for the Swami's companions. Many excursions were made; and many were the discussions in which the Swami became so interested that he would sometimes forget all thought of food. The topics were extremely varied. Sometimes the subject would be the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, especially the period under Kanishka; again the morality of Buddhism and the religious imperialism of Asoka, or the history of Siva-worship. One day he spoke of the conquests of Chenghis Khan, of whom he said, "He was not a vulgar aggressor," and compared him with Napoleon and Alexander, saying that he, like the other two "was inspired with the thought of unity,—he wanted to unify his world." And he went on to say that those

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three were perhaps one soul, "manifesting itself in three different conquests," in the same way that one Soul might have come again and again as Krishna, Buddha and Christ to bring about the unity of man in God in the world of religious realities. Often the talk would be on the Gita, "that wonderful poem, without one note in it of weakness or unmanliness."

He had been in Kashmir scarcely a week when the desire for solitude swept over him and he would break away from the little company to roam about alone,—returning later radiant from his contact with the Source of all Knowledge. After such an experience he would reiterate, "It is a sin even to *think* of the body;" "It is wrong to *manifest* power!" Or again, "Things do not grow better. They remain as they were. It is *we* who grow better, by the changes we make in ourselves." He constantly interpreted human life as an expression of God. Social life seemed to be agony to him, so antagonistic was it to the old-time idea of the quiet and self-effacement of the monk. Speaking of these days the Sister Nivedita writes:

"The life of the silent ashen-clad wanderer, or the hidden hermit, he thought of, it would now and then seem, as the lover might think of the beloved. At no time would it have surprised us, had someone told us that today or tomorrow he would be gone for ever, that we were now listening to his voice for the last time. He, and necessarily we, in all that depended on him, were as straws carried on the Ganges of the Eternal Will. At any moment It might reveal Itself to him as Silence. At any moment life in the world might end for him.

"This plan-less-ness was not an accident. Never can I forget the disgust with which he turned on myself once, a couple of years later, when I had offered him some piece of worldly wisdom regarding his own answer to a letter which he had brought for me to see. 'Plans! Plans!' he exclaimed in indignation. 'That is why you Western people can never create a religion! If any of you ever did, it was only a few Catholic

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saints, who had no plans. Religion was never, never preached by planners!' "

It can be readily understood that, living in the shadow of that great life fired with a burning passion for the highest, it became evident to the Western pilgrims that his plan-less-ness was the result of knowledge, and that solitude and silence was the greatest medium of self-development.

“Nothing,” said the Swami, “better illustrated to his own mind, the difference between Eastern and Western methods of thought, than the European idea that a man could not live alone for twenty years and remain quite sane, taken side by side with the Indian notion that till a man had been alone for twenty years, he could not be regarded as perfectly himself.”

Among the small excursions made at this time in the company of his disciples was the one to the temple of Takt-i-Suleiman, situated on the summit of a small mountain two to three thousand feet high. Beholding the beautiful and the extensive scenery of the place the Swami exclaimed, "Look! What genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See! The Takt commands the whole of Kashmir. The rock of Hari Parvat rises red out of blue water, like a lion couchant, crowned. And the temple of Mârttanda has the valley at its feet!" Then he launched into a long discourse on the innate love of nature in the Hindu character, which showed itself in its choice of sites of peculiar beauty and importance for building temples, hermitages and monuments.

Always given to merriment, the Swami postponed a contemplated journey to organise for his American friends a surprise celebration of the Fourth of July, their national festival. Taking the one non-American

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member of the party into his confidence, he went out late on the afternoon of the third and brought a Brâhman tailor in great excitement, asking her to explain to the man how to make a replica of the American flag. The stars and stripes were very crudely represented on the piece of cotton that was nailed, with branches of evergreens, to the head of the dining-room-boat, where an early tea was arranged for. As his own special contribution to the event, he wrote a poem which was read aloud by way of greeting, entitled "To the Fourth of July," a passionate utterance of his own longing for the Final Freedom in the Infinite. Time proved it to have been penned in a prophetic vein, for four years later to that very day, his shackles of work broken, he entered in "springing joy" into that Final Freedom concerning which he had written.

On the journey back to Srinagar the Swami was full of the ideal of renunciation, and carried away by his mood he spoke with uncompromising scorn against those who sought to glorify the worldly life. "Is it so easy," he explained, "to be a Janaka? To sit on a throne absolutely unattached? Caring nothing for wealth or fame, for wife or child? One after another in the West has told me that he had reached this. To them I could only say—'Such great men are not born in India!'" On the other hand he said, "Never forget to say to yourself, and to teach to your children,— 'As is the difference between a fire-fly and the blazing sun, between the infinite ocean and a little pond, between a mustard-seed and the mountain of Meru, such is the difference between the householder and the Sannyâsin!'" He would bless, he said, even the fraudulent Sâdhus and those who failed to keep to their vows, "inasmuch as they also have witnessed to the ideal, and so are in some degree the cause of the

success of others !” Had it not been for the Geruâ, the emblem of monasticism, he pointed out, luxury and worldliness would have robbed man of all his manliness.

A desire for quiet and peace seemed to grow more and more upon the Swami in these days, and the absence of two of his American disciples on a short visit to Gulmarg he took to be a fit opportunity to carry out his design. Without revealing his plans he made preparations for a pilgrimage to the famous Siva shrine of Amarnâth by way of Sonamârg, and left on July 10, penniless and alone. On the fifteenth he returned, as he found the route was impracticable because of the summer heat which had melted some of the glaciers.

The next day, or the day after, in speaking of Bhakti, of Siva and Uma, and of Radha and Krishna, he became so absorbed that he paid no heed to repeated calls for breakfast. He responded at last reluctantly, saying, “When one has all this Bhakti what does one want with food?”

On the eighteenth the whole party drifted down to Islamabad. On the afternoon of the next day they sought out and found the quaint old Temple of Pandrenthan, sunken in a scum-covered pond within a wood by the side of the Jhelum. Inside the temple the Swami introduced his companions to the study of Indian archæology and taught them to observe the decorations in the interior with their sun-medallion and beautiful sculpture, in low relief, of male and female figures intertwined with serpents. Among the outside carvings was a fine image of Buddha, standing, with his hands uplifted, in one of the trefoil arches of the eastern door, and a much defaced frieze of a seated woman, with a tree,—evidently Mâyâ Devi, Buddha’s mother. The temple was built of

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heavy grey limestone and dated perhaps from Kanishka's time, 150 A.D. To the Swami, writes Sister Nivedita :

"The place was delightfully suggestive. It was a direct memorial of Buddhism, representing one of the four religious periods into which he had already divided the History of Kashmir: 1. Tree and Snake-worship, from which dated all the names of the springs ending in Nâg, as Vêrnâg, and so on; 2. Buddhism; 3. Hinduism, in the form of Sun-worship; and 4. Mohammedanism. Sculpture, he told us, was the characteristic art of Buddhism, and the sun-medallion, or lotus, one of its commonest ornaments. The figures with the serpents referred to pre-Buddhism. . . ."

It was sunset when the party returned to their boats. The presence in the wood of that silent chapel and of Buddha must have moved the Swami deeply, for on that evening his mind overflowed with historical comparisons. He spoke, for instance, of the points of similarity between the Vedic and the Roman Catholic ritual, holding the latter to have been derived from the former through Buddhism which was only an offshoot of Hinduism. "Vedic ritual," he pointed out, "has its Mass, the offering of food to God, your Blessed Sacrament, our Prasâd. Only it is offered sitting, not kneeling, as is common in hot countries. They kneel in Thibet. Then, too, Vedic ritual has its lights, incense, music." When it was suggested that Hinduism had no Common Prayer, he flashed out at his opponent,—“No! and neither had Christianity! That is pure Protestantism and Protestantism took it from the Mohammedans perhaps through Moorish influence? Mohammedanism is the only religion that has completely broken down the idea of the priest. The leader of prayer stands with his back to the people, and only the reading of the Koran may take place from the pulpit. Protestantism is an approach to this.”

## AT AMARNATH

“Even the tonsure,” he continued, “existed in India, in the shaven head. . . . The monk and nun both existed in pre-Buddhistic Hinduism. Europe gets her orders from the Thebaid.”

Almost the whole of Christianity, he believed, was Aryan,—Indian and Egyptian ideas tintured with Judaism and Hellenism. Of the historicity of Jesus, he said, he had doubted in a way since his significant dream off Crete. However,—“Two things stand out as personal living touches in the life of Christ,—the woman taken in adultery,—the most beautiful story in literature,—and the woman at the well. How strangely true is this last, to Indian life! A woman, coming to draw water, finds, seated at the well-side, a yellow-clad monk. He asks her for water. Then he teaches her, and does a little mind-reading and so on. But in India when she went to call the villagers, the monk would have taken his chance, and fled to the forest!”

Of the prominent figures of Christianity he remarked that only of Saint Paul could history be sure, “and he was not an eye-witness, and according to his own showing was capable of Jesuitry—‘by all means save souls’—isn’t it?” He preferred Strauss to Renan, whose “Life of Jesus is mere froth,” and felt also that the Acts and Epistles were older than the Gospels. Saint Paul’s greatness lay in that he had galvanised into life an obscure Nazarene sect of great antiquity, which “furnished the mythic personality as a centre of worship.” But at the bottom was the great Rabbi Hillel, who was responsible for the teachings of Jesus. “The Resurrection,” he said, “was, of course, simply spring cremation. Only the rich Greeks and Romans had had cremation anyway, and the new sun-myth would only stop it amongst the few.”

Of Buddha, the Swami thought that he was the

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greatest man that had ever lived. "He never drew a breath for himself," he exclaimed. "Above all, he never claimed worship. He said, 'Buddha is not a man, but a state. I have found the door. Enter, all of you!'"

Drifting down the river, and enjoying the lovely scenery around, the party came the next day to the ruins of the two great temples of Avantipur, and on the twenty-second went on to Islamabad after visiting the temple of Bijbehâra. The Swami took long walks in the morning with one or more of his pupils, across the fields and along the banks of the Jhelum. And his talks during these walks were as exhilarating as the mountain breeze that blew upon them, and as soul-enthraling as the blossoms on the fruit trees all about.

Discoursing on the sense of sin as current among the Egyptian, Semitic and Aryan races, he pointed out that though it appears in the Vedas it quickly disappears, while the Egyptians and Semites cling to it as one of the main planks of their religious ideas. The Devil, according to the Vedic conception, is Lord of Anger, with the Buddhists he is Mâra, the Lord of Lust. "But while Satan is the Hamlet of the Bible, in the Hindu scriptures the Lord of Anger never divides Creation. He always represents defilement, never duality. With Zoroaster, who was a reformer of some old religion which must have been Vedântic, Ormuzd and Ahriman were not supreme, they were only manifestations of the Supreme. In India, Righteousness and Sin—Vidyâ and Avidyâ—have both to be transcended to reach the highest truth."

The talk would often drift to matters pertaining to his motherland and the future. "In order to strengthen the national life," he said, "we must reinforce the current of that life itself along the line of its



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own culture and ideals. For instance, Buddha preached renunciation and India listened. Yet within a thousand years, she had reached her highest point of national prosperity. The national life in India has renunciation as its source. Its highest ideals are service and Mukti."

"No nation, not Greek or another, has ever carried patriotism so far as the Japanese. They don't talk, they act—give up all for country. There are noblemen now living in Japan who gave up their political privileges and powers to create the unity of the empire. And not one traitor could be found in the Japanese war. Think of that!"

"The Sannyâsin who thinks of gold, to desire it, commits suicide."

"With the Hindus, marriage is not for individual happiness, but for the welfare of the nation and the caste."

"You are so morbid, you Westerners! You worship Sorrow! All through your country I found that. Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface: really, it is full of tragic intensity. Here, it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."

"A leader is not made in one life. He has to be born for it. For the difficulty is not in organisation and making plans; the test, the real test, of a leader lies in holding widely different people together, along the line of their common sympathies. And this can only be done unconsciously, never by trying."

But there was another side. The Swami was not the philosopher or the teacher all the time. He could be gay as well as grave, full of fun, jokes and humorous stories,—a phenomenon which shocked the feelings of the divines and ecclesiastics when he was in the West. Some had even told him to his face, "Swami, you are a religious preacher. You should not give yourself up to laughter and frivolity like common folk. Such conduct does not befit you." But his reply was, "We are children of Bliss and Light! Why should we be sombre and morose?"

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Once at Islamabad, as the group sat round him on the grass in an apple orchard, during the evening hours, he was "engaged in the rarest of rare happenings"—a talk of a personal character. Picking up two pebbles in his hand he said, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*"—and the stones struck one another in his hand—"for I *have* touched the feet of God!" Then he went on to tell them some remarkable episodes of his Parivrâjaka life. The talk came to an end abruptly, when a child with a badly cut hand was brought to him by the villagers. He himself bathed the wound with water and applied the ashes of a piece of calico to stop the bleeding.

Next morning, the twenty-third, the entire party visited the ruins of Marttanda, where they noted that the rest-house round the Temple was strangely Gothic in shape.

On the twenty-fifth they journeyed on to Acchabal, over a road of exquisite beauty. It was at Acchabal that the Swami during an open-air meal suddenly announced to his companions his intention to go to Amarnath, in company with the two or three thousand pilgrims then *en route* for the Shrine. As a special privilege Sister Nivedita was allowed to join him on the pilgrimage, so that she, as a future worker, might have a direct knowledge and insight into that time-honoured religious institution of his country. It was settled later, that his other European disciples would accompany the party as far as Pahlgam and there await the Swami's return. Accordingly, returning to the boats, the start was made next afternoon, July 26, for Bawan, the first stopping-place on the way to the sacred shrine of Amarnath.

## AT AMARNATH

The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far-away Cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. One is struck with wonder at the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity at every halting-place, with its tents of various colours and of all shapes and sizes, with its Bazaars, and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of gay pilgrims set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking-fires, the ashen-smeared Sâdhus under the canopy of their large Geruâ umbrellas stuck in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their Dhunis, the Sannyâsins of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus,—all these are most impressive, and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion.

Taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the Swami in common with his fellow-disciples, had learnt to observe scrupulously all those customs and rules of conduct which had become consecrated during the ages, by the faith of millions. Thus while presiding over a Pujâ, or religious service, or over the initiation of a disciple into Sannyâs, he would see to it that all the necessary materials and accessories were correct in their minutest details and made ready in a proper way, and that the ceremony and chanting of Mantras and so on were conducted strictly in accordance with Vedic injunctions. While on pilgrimage he

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would do everything in the same devout way as the most simple-minded woman about him. He would bathe in the holy waters, offer flowers, fruits and sweets to the object of worship before breaking his fast, make obeisance prostrating himself on the ground, tell his beads, make Pradakshinâ and the like. The Swami, as befits one whose methods were always constructive and respectful of the varying stages and tendencies of those who came to him for guidance, as well as the vast number of pilgrims all about, made himself one with everyone in these ceremonials and rites. And so we see him imbued with the spirit of the pilgrimage, practising austerities with devotion and ardour, eating one meal a day cooked in the orthodox fashion, seeking solitude and silence as far as was possible, telling his beads and devoting much time to meditation in his tent.

On the hundreds of monks the Swami's influence was tremendous, though at first he encountered strong opposition from the more orthodox of them, because of the presence of his foreign disciples. When their tents were pitched too near the pilgrims' camp, the Sâdhus raised a clamour demanding them to be removed further. The Swami treated their complaints with scorn, till a Nâgâ Sâdhu came up to him and said meekly, "Swamiji, you *have* the power, but you ought not to manifest it!" The Swami understood, and had the tents removed at once. Curiously enough, from the next day they all made way for him, and his tent as well as that of Sister Nivedita were placed at the head of the camp, in some commanding position. And throughout the rest of the journey, at every resting-place, the Swami's tent was besieged by scores of monks seeking knowledge from him. Many of them could not understand his broad liberal views on religious subjects and his warmth of

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love and sympathy for Islam. The Mohammedan Tahsildar, the state-official in charge of the whole pilgrimage, and his subordinates were so attracted to the Swami that they attended his talks daily, and afterwards entreated him to initiate them. Sister Nivedita also, by her amiable manners, soon became a general favourite with the pilgrims and received from them "endless touching little kindnesses."

Passing Bawan, noted for its holy springs, and Eismukkam, the Swami and the host of pilgrims reached Pahlgam, the village of the shepherds, and encamped at the foot of an arrow-shaped ravine beside the roaring torrent of the Lidar. Here they made a halt for a day to observe the Ekâdasi fast. Near Chandanawara, the next stage, the Swami insisted that his disciple climb her first glacier of a height of several thousand feet on foot. Exhausted with still another steep climb, scrambling up and down goat-paths at the edge of precipitous slopes, they pitched their tents amongst the snow-peaks, at an altitude of 18,000 feet. The whole of the following morning was a steady climb, till at last the source of the Lidar lay five hundred feet below, hushed in its icy mantle. Next day, crossing frost-bound peaks and glaciers the procession reached Panchatarni, the place of the five streams. In every one of these the pilgrims were required to take a dip, passing from one stream to another in wet clothes, in spite of the intense cold. Careful to observe every rite of the pilgrimage, the Swami cleverly escaped the observation of his spiritual daughter and fulfilled the law to the last letter in this matter.

On August 2, the day of Amarnath itself, the pilgrims after making a steep climb, and then a descent in which one false step would have meant instant death, walked along the glacier mile after mile

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till they reached a flowing stream, in which they bathed before entering the Cave which was reached after another stiff ascent. The Swami who had fallen behind, perhaps intentionally, so as to be alone with his thoughts, came up and sent his waiting disciple on and bathed in the river. He then reached the cave, his whole frame shaking with emotion. The cave itself was "large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Siva, in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base." Then, his body covered with ashes, his face aflame with supreme devotion to Siva, he entered the shrine itself, nude, except for a loin-cloth; and kneeling in adoration he bowed low before the Lord. A song of praise from a hundred throats resounded in the cave, and the shining purity of the great ice-Lingam overpowered him. He almost swooned with emotion. A great mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke, beyond saying that Siva Himself had appeared before him and that he had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, not to die until he himself should choose to throw off his mortal bonds, corroboration of the words of his Divine Master regarding him,—“When he realises who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body!” Also it might be that, in his wrestling with the soul to keep itself from merging in the Absolute, “was defeated or fulfilled that presentiment which had haunted him from childhood, that he would meet with death in a Siva-temple amongst the mountains.” Indeed, so intense had been the shock of his mystical experience upon his physical frame that later on a doctor said, “Swamiji, it was almost death! Your heart ought naturally to have stopped beating. It has undergone a permanent enlargement instead.”

Never had the Swami visited a religious place with

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such spiritual exaltation. To his European disciple he said afterwards "The image *was* the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring!" Later on, in the circle of his Gurubhais and disciples, he said dreamily, "I can well imagine, how this cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day, must have lost their flocks and wandered in here in search of them. What must have been their feeling as they found themselves unexpectedly before this unmelting ice-image white like camphor, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over it for centuries, unseen of mortal eyes! Then when they came home they whispered to the other shepherds in the valleys how they had suddenly come upon Mahâ-deva!" Be that as it may, in the case of the Swami, it was truly so, in that he entered the cave and came face to face there with the Lord Himself! And if Amarnath had been an awesome religious experience to him, more so than Amarnath was the Swami to his companion. So saturated had his personality become with the Presence of that God that for days thereafter he could speak of nothing but Siva. Siva was all in all; Siva, the Eternal One, the Great Monk, rapt in meditation, aloof from all worldliness.

The journey down the mountain trails to Pahlgam was interesting. The party passed the celebrated Lake of Death, into which, on one occasion, some forty pilgrims had been plunged by an avalanche, started, it is believed, by the volume of their song. The Swami and some of the pilgrims took a short-cut from here by taking to a narrow sheep-track which led down the face of a steep cliff. At Pahlgam, there was joy when he again met his other European disciples, and the Swami talked of nothing but Siva and the shrine and the great verge of vision.

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On August 8, the party were on their way to Srinagar where they remained until September 30. During this time the Swami frequently went off in his boat by himself and remained for days in strictest solitude. His desire for introspection and meditation became more and more pronounced. Nevertheless, he continued to instruct his disciples about India and his own ideas, dwelling in particular upon "the *inclusiveness* of his conception of the country and its religions," of his own longing to make Hinduism active and *aggressive*, a missionary faith, without its present "don't-touchism," and of the necessity of commingling the highest meditative with the most active, practical life. "To be as deep as the ocean and as broad as the sky," he said quoting Sri Ramakrishna, "was the ideal." "Sri Ramakrishna," he continued, "was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane he was perfectly active and capable." At one time, before the trip to Amarnath, when someone had asked him, "Sir, what should we do when we see the strong oppress the weak?" he had made reply, "Why, thrash the strong, of course!"

"Even forgiveness," he said on a similar occasion, "if weak and passive, is not good: to fight is better. *Forgive* when you can bring legions of angels to an easy victory. . . . The world is a battlefield, fight your way out." Another asked him, "Swamiji, ought one to die in defence of right, or ought one to learn never to react?" "I am for no reaction," replied the Swami slowly, and after a long pause added, "—for Sannyâsins. Self-defence for the householder!"

In Kashmir, the Swami and his party were treated with the greatest consideration by the Maharaja and all during his stay various high officials visited the



Swami's house-boat to receive religious instructions and converse with him upon general topics. The Swami had come at the express invitation of the Maharaja, to choose a tract of land for the establishment of a monastery and a Sanskrit college. There was a beautiful spot by the river-side, which was used as a camping ground by Europeans. The Swami chose this site and the Maharaja, approving of his choice expressed his willingness to give it to him for his educational scheme. Some time after the return from Amarnath, the Western disciples, caught up in the Swami's prevailing meditative mood, were desirous of practising meditation in silence and solitude. The Swami encouraged them, and suggested that they go and live in tents on the prospective Math ground, adding that it is auspicious, according to the Hindu idea, to have a new homestead blessed by women. And thus "a women's Math" was established there, as it were, and the Swami coming occasionally for a short visit would talk to them of his dream of realising the great idea of "by the people, for the people, as a joy to worker and to served."

It was a blow to the Swami, therefore, when about the middle of September, he heard officially that it would be impracticable to secure lands for the erection of his proposed monastery and Sanskrit college in Kashmir, for his choice was twice vetoed by the Resident. Though this news temporarily depressed him, the Swami began to understand, after much reflection, that for various reasons Kashmir, or any Native State for that matter would not be a suitable place for him to try the experiment of bringing his Indian followers into contact with European and *vice versa*. He realised that Bengal was far more suitable for any educational propaganda for India than this distant State; and Calcutta, the metropolis, was the

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intellectual centre of the country. Besides, so far as his having a monastery in a cool climate was concerned, that project had been taken up in earnest by his disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and already they were on the look out for a tract of land in the hills of Kumaon for this purpose. The Swami accepted the obstacles that had come in his path, therefore, as the Will of the Mother, and felt that all was for the best.

Following the pilgrimage to Amarnath, the Swami's devotion concentrated itself on the Mother. The songs of Râmprasâd were constantly upon his lips. The strength which comes of the meditation on the Eternal One now shifted itself to the devotion of a child. And it was sweet and touching to see how he would worship, as Uma, the little four-year old daughter of his Mohammedan boatman. He told his disciples once during these days that "wherever he turned he was conscious of the Presence of the Mother, as if She were a person in the room." He felt that it was She or his own Master "Whose hands are clasped upon my own and who leads me as though I were a child." And now through the intensity of his spiritual personality, everything in the life of his comrades was associated with the thought of the Mother, as it had been before with that of Siva.

The strain of meditation became more and more intense and the Swami bitterly "complained of the malady of thought, which would consume a man, leaving him no time for sleep or rest, and would often become as insistent as a human voice." One day in the second week of September he had an experience, which can be compared only perhaps to that which he had had in the Dakshineswar temple-garden years ago, when at the bidding of Sri Ramakrishna he had gone to pray to the Mother to be relieved of the great strain of poverty that was upon him then.

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He had gone in his boat to a solitary place, the only person he allowed to visit him was a certain Brâhmo doctor, who had become devotedly attached to him during his sojourn in Kashmir that summer, and who came regularly to enquire after his daily needs. When the doctor found him lost in thought, or in meditation he would leave him quietly without disturbing him. The Swami's brain seethed with the vision and the consciousness of the Mother, whose personality literally overshadowed him. It became at once the most ascetic torture and the most ecstatic blessedness. His mind was tuned to the highest pitch. Revelation *must* come, or the mind would give way.

One evening it came. He had centred "his whole attention on the dark, the painful and the inscrutable in the world, with the determination to reach, by this particular road, the One behind phenomena,"—for such was his conception of the Mother. His whole frame shook as if under an electric shock. Was this what the Yogis speak of as the awakening of the Kula-kundalini? Outside it was all stillness; but within him a world-destroying tempest raged. While his vision was intensest, he wrote a poem, "Kâli, the Mother"—now one of his best-known ones—in which a glimpse of his vision of the tumult of the universe, the *sturm und drâng* of the cosmos which he pictured as the mad joy of the Mother's Dance is given. Filled with this sublime consciousness he wrote to the last word; the pen fell from his hand; he himself dropped to the floor losing consciousness, his soul soaring into the highest forms of Bhâva-Samâdhi. The man who had swayed thousands in the West, who had roused the Indian consciousness as it never was roused since the days of the Achâryas, lay as if dead in a swoon of ecstasy and awe!

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The Swami now gave himself to constant explanations of the worship of the Mother to his disciples and in calling upon Her, "Who is Herself, time, change and ceaseless energy." He would say, quoting the great Psalmist, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee," or "It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek pain. There can be bliss in torture, too. Let us worship the Terror for its own sake." Again, "Learn to recognise the Mother as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow and annihilation as in that which makes for sweetness and joy!" Or "True, they garland Thee with skulls, but shrink back in fright, and call Thee, 'O All-merciful One'!" "Only by the worship of the Terrible, can the Terrible itself be overcome and immortality gained. Meditate on death! Meditate on death! Worship the Terrible, the Terrible, the Terrible! And the Mother Herself is Brahman! Even Her curse is a blessing. The heart must become a cremation-ground, pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt into ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come!" Writes Sister Niveditâ:

'And as he spoke, the underlying egoism of worship that is devoted to the *kind* God, to Providence, the consoling Divinity, without a heart for God in the earthquake, or God in the volcano, overwhelmed the listener. One saw that such worship was at bottom, as the Hindu calls it, merely 'shop-keeping,' and one realised the infinitely greater boldness and truth of the teaching that God manifests through evil *as well as* through good. One saw that the true attitude for the mind and will that are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact the determination, in the stern words of the Swami Vivekananda, 'to seek death not life, to hurl oneself upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible for evermore!'

And often, now and later, in moments of severe illness or pain, he would be heard to exclaim, "She is the organ! She is the pain! And She is the giver of pain! Kali! Kali! Kali!" In all of his instructions

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these days he would say, "There must be no fear. No begging, but demanding,—*demanding* the Highest! The true devotees of the Mother are as hard as adamant and as fearless as lions. They are not the least upset if the whole universe suddenly crumbled into dust at their feet! *Make* Her listen to you. None of that *cringing* to Mother! Remember! She is all-powerful; She can make heroes even out of *stones*!"

Wherever, he would say, the Mother was, there was no fear, wherever there was renunciation or self-forgetfulness, wherever there was the vision that "Everything which one touches is pain," the child-soul turns to Mother for relief and support. And in the meditation on the skull and cross-bones of the Western mystic, he would see a dim reflection of the universal aspect of Mother-worship. His idea of the Divine Motherhood, the Power behind all manifestation, was as poetic as it was impersonal.

Following the experience related above, the Swami retired abruptly on September 30, to the Coloured Springs of Kshir-Bhavâni, leaving strict injunctions that no one was to follow him. It was not until October 6, that he returned. Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa and worshipped Her with the offerings of Kshira, or thickened milk, made from one maund of milk, rice and almonds, and told his beads like the humblest pilgrim. And, as a special Sâdhanâ, he worshipped every morning a Brâhman Pandit's little daughter as Umâ Kumâri, the Divine Virgin. He began to practise terrible austerities. It seemed as if he would tear off all the veils that covered his soul through years of work and relative thought and again be the child before the Divine Mother. Even though Her caresses might prove pain to the body, they would give illumination and freedom to his soul. All thought

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of Leader, Worker, or Teacher was gone. He was now only the monk, in all the nakedness of pure Sannyâs.

He was transfigured when he returned to Srinagar. He entered the house-boat, his hands raised in benediction; then he placed some marigolds which he had offered to the Mother on the head of every one of his disciples. "No more 'Hari Om!' It is all 'Mother' now!" he said, sitting down. "All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only 'Mother! Mother!' I have been very wrong. Mother said to me, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter My temples, and defile My images! What is that to you? Do *you* protect Me? Or do *I* protect you?' So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child!" One day he had been pondering over the ruins and the desecration of the temple wrought by the vandalism of the Mohammedan invaders. Distressed at heart he thought, "How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance! If I were here then I would never have allowed such things. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother." It was then that he had heard the Mother speaking as above. The disciples sat silent, awe-inspired. They could not speak, "so tense was the spot with something that stilled thoughts." "I may not tell you more now," he said addressing his disciples before leaving, "it is not in order. But spiritually, *spiritually*, I was not bound down!"

Though again with his disciples, they saw little of him. For hours he would walk beside the river in the secluded woods, absorbed within himself, so much so that he would not even see his companions on the roof of their house-boat. One day he appeared before them with shaven head, dressed as the simplest Sannyâsin,

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and with a look of unapproachable austerity on his face. Quoting from his own poem, "Kali The Mother," he interrupted himself to say, "It all came true, every word of it; and I have proved it, *for I have hugged the Form of Death!*" And here and there, the details of that austerity and fasting and self-renunciation he had practised at Kshir-Bhavani, and the revelations that had come to him were touched upon in his remarks. In his meditation on the Terrible in the dark hours of the nights at Kshir-Bhavani, there were other visions which he confided only to one or two of his Gurubhais, and which are too sacred to reveal to the public. It seemed, indeed, as if the Swami's whole nature rose in a supreme effort in a final struggle to rise above all worldly Samskâras.

At this same shrine, in the course of worship, one day, the Swami brooding with pain on the dilapidated condition of the temple, wished in his heart that he were able to build a new one there in its place, just as he wished to build his monasteries elsewhere, especially the temple to Sri Ramakrishna in the new Math at Belur. He was startled from his reveries by the voice of the Mother Herself saying to him, "My child! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot." "Since I heard that Divine Voice," said the Swami to a disciple in Calcutta much later, "I have ceased making any more plans. Let these things be as Mother wills!"

During these days also, the Swami had an experience of a disquieting nature. Alluding to it he spoke later as "a crisis in his life." A disciple of a Mohammedan Fakir used to come to him occasionally, attracted by his personality. Hearing one day that he was suffering from fever and severe headache,

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the Swami out of compassion touched him on the head with his fingers and, to his great surprise, the man's ailments left him. After that he became very much devoted to the Swami, and came to him oftener than before. But the man's Guru, the Fakir, when he heard of this, became bitterly jealous of the Swami, and afraid lest his disciple forsake him, spoke ill of the Swami and warned his disciple not to see him. Finding that his words had no effect, the man was irate and abused the Swami to his disciple. And actuated by a spirit of revenge, as also, perhaps, to convince him of his greater psychic power, he threatened to use charms against the Swami and prophesied that he would vomit and feel giddy before he left Kashmir. This actually came about and the Swami was precipitated into great perplexity of mind and furious wrath, not against the Fakir but against himself and his Master. He thought: "What good is Sri Ramakrishna to me?—What good are all my realisations and preaching of Vedânta and the omnipotence of the Soul within, when I myself could not save myself from the diabolical powers of a black magician?" This experience exercised his mind so much that even when he reached Calcutta three weeks later, it continued to agitate him and he told the Holy Mother, who happened to be there at the time, all about it.

Preparations were now made to go to the plains. The Swami spoke in a very casual way about the future. He had no plans; all that he would wish for himself was the life of the monk, of silence and forgottenness. "‘Swamiji’ was dead and gone. Who was he that he should feel the urge for teaching the world? It was all fuss and vanity. The Mother had no need of him, but only he of Her. Work, when one had seen this, was nothing but illusion." An over-mastering love enveloped him. He believed now in



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nothing but love, love, love,—love so intense that, it would be impossible for even the vilest enemies to resist it. To continue, in the words of Sister Nivedita :

“ . . . I can give no idea of the *vastness* of which all this was utterance,—as if no blow, to any in the world, could pass and leave our Master’s heart untouched; as if no pain, even to that of death, could elicit anything but love and blessing. .

“He told us the story of Vasishtha and Viswâmitra ; of Vasishtha’s hundred descendants slain; and the sage left alone, landless and helpless, to live out his life. Then he pictured the hut standing in the moonlight, amongst the trees, and Vasishtha and his wife within. He is poring intently over some precious page, written by his great rival, when she draws near and hangs over him for a moment, saying, ‘Look, how bright is the moon tonight!’ And he, without looking up,—‘But ten thousand times brighter, my love, is the intellect of Viswamitra!’

“All forgotten! the deaths of his hundred children, his own wrongs, and his sufferings, and his heart lost in admiration of the genius of his foe! Such, said the Swami, should be our love also, like that of Vasishtha for Viswamitra, without the slightest tinge of personal memory.”

The whole party came back to Baramulla on October 11, and left for Lahore the next day. The European disciples had decided to accompany the Swami thither, and wait there for some days, and then go sight-seeing in some of the principal cities of Northern India such as, Delhi, Agra, etc., with Swami Saradananda. The river trip to Baramulla was noticeable only for the extreme silence of the Swami, who preferred to be almost entirely by himself, and walked at the riverside alone mornings and evenings. He looked so ill and worn out that his companions feared a break-down. Writes Sister Nivedita :

“The physical ebb of the great experience through which he had just passed—for even suffering becomes impossible,

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when a given point of weariness is reached; and similarly, the body refuses to harbour a certain intensity of the spiritual life for an indefinite period!—was leaving him, doubtless, more exhausted, than he himself suspected. All this contributed, one imagines, to a feeling that none of us knew for how long a time we might now be parting."

### XXXIII

## CONSECRATION OF THE MATH: ITS SCOPE AND IDEALS

The Swami left Lahore attended by Swami Sadananda, who had hurried down thither from Almora on the receipt of a wire from him. They arrived at the monastery at Belur on October 18. The Swami's unexpected appearance made his brother monks and disciples very happy but their joy gave place to pain when they saw how pale and ill he was.

Among the members who had joined the monastery both before and during his absence were those who later became Swamis Vimalânanda, Bodhânanda, Kalyânânanda and Somânanda; the former two had joined when the Math was at Alambazar and the latter at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house. These, with the other disciples, had followed regular courses of study on the Vedas, Hindu theology and even material science. Paramount, of course, were the worship of the Master, and hours of meditation and devotion.

Notwithstanding his failing health the Swami resumed his old life with the monks. Hours were spent in religious converse and question-classes were held; the scriptures were read and commented upon, and he took up seriously the work of training the members. He instituted regulations and monastic discipline with spiritual and intellectual work for certain hours of the day. On the very day of his arrival he thrilled his auditors by reading, with his characteristic eloquence and depth of feeling, the three poems composed by him in Kashmir. Every word of the poems, as uttered

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by him, seemed ensouled with his own realisations. On the nineteenth and the twentieth he performed the Homa ceremony. The next three days were given over to the services and gatherings of the lay disciples of the Order on the occasion of the great religious festival of Durgâ Pujâ. On the twenty-fourth the Swami Turiyananda arrived from Almora. Everything was now being centred, as it were, in the monastery, and the devotional fervour of the Baranagore days seemed to shine forth anew.

From November 1, the Swami's movements alternated between the monastery and the residence of Balaram Babu in Baghbazar. On the fifth of the month he received at the Math, Mr. Rishibar Mukherjee, the Chief Justice and Mr. Nilambar Mukherjee, the Prime Minister of Kashmir. On the following day he had as his guests there the European disciples who had accompanied him to Kashmir and who had now returned to Calcutta, after a tour of the historic cities in Northern India.

Three days after, on November 12, the day of the Kâli Pujâ, the Holy Mother, accompanied by a number of women devotees, visited the site of the permanent abode of the Ramakrishna Order. The monks were all present and had made elaborate arrangements for worship. The picture of the Master worshipped in the Math had been taken by them thither. The Holy Mother had also brought her own image of the Master, and with special worship she blessed the place.

In the afternoon she with her party, as also the Swami with Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda, returned to Calcutta to perform at the request of the Swami, that evening, the opening ceremony of Sister Nivedita Girls' School in Baghbazar. At the end of the ceremony the Holy Mother "prayed that

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the blessing of the Great Mother of the universe might be upon the school and that the girls it should train be ideal girls." And of this blessing Sister Nivedita herself has written,—“I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessing, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future.”

From his first meeting with Sister Nivedita, the Swami had discussed with her at great length about the situation of Indian women, and his plans for the education of Hindu girls. She was well known as an educator in England and had come to India expressly to be of service to Indian women. He had talked with her, in an especial sense, about his plans for the amelioration of the conditions of the women of his native land. It was understood, during her stay both in Calcutta and Almora, and later during her wanderings with the Swami in Kashmir, that at the first opportunity, she would open a girls' school in Calcutta, so as “to make some educational discovery, which would be qualitatively true and universally applicable to the work of the modern education of Indian women” at large. With this in mind, after touring in Northern India with the group of her European companions she decided to forget that she was European and came to live with the Holy Mother. Later, a separate house near by was rented for her, but she spent her nights with the women devotees of the Holy Mother's household. The Swami, when in Calcutta, saw her frequently and gave her additional insight into the Indian consciousness and into the nature of work she had assumed; this insight she has embodied in her book, “The Web of Indian Life.” At the Holy Mother's residence she came in touch with several orthodox women who were well-versed in the epics, the dramas and the religion of Hinduism, and whose lives were examples of the value and realisa-

tions of Hinduism to their European guest. This was of especial advantage to her, and she herself lived the life of a Hindu Brahmachârini and soon became altogether Hinduised.

This marks the beginning of Sister Nivedita's work in India. The Swami evinced the most interest in it at the time. He gave her perfect liberty in the elucidation of her ideas. She was to be free from collaborators, if she so chose; above all, she might, if she so wished, give her work "a definite religious colour" or even make it sectarian. But he added knowingly: "You wish through a sect to rise beyond all sects." Eventually it should include all sects, not only within, but without the pale of Hinduism. The Swami once told her, "If amidst their new tasks the Indian women of the future would only remember now and then to say, 'Siva! Siva!' it would be sufficient worship." In giving his idea of what a worker in the cause of womanhood should be, he once said to Sister Nivedita, "Yes, you have faith, but you have not that burning enthusiasm that you need! You should be consuming energy." Then he blessed her and "she became a consuming energy in its cause."

Though the ceremony of consecration of the Ramakrishna Math took place on December 9, the consecration of the newly-bought Math grounds had been celebrated long ago, in one of the early days of March, 1898. On this latter occasion, the Swami himself performed all the sacred rites, helped by his Gurubhais and disciples, on the new monastery grounds. The proceedings, throughout, were most impressive and inspiring. After making ablutions in the Ganges, the Swami put on a new Geruâ robe, entered the chapel and sat in meditation on the worshipper's seat. He then worshipped the relics of Sri

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Ramakrishna with great veneration, burying them under heaps of flowers and Bilva leaves, and became again absorbed in deep meditation. Swami Premananda and the other monks of the Brotherhood stood at the door watching him worship.

After worship a procession was formed of the whole Brotherhood, which wended its way by the bank of the Ganges from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to the site of the new monastery, led by the Swami who carried on his right shoulder the urn containing the hallowed remains of Sri Ramakrishna. The sound of the blowing of conchshells and the beating of gongs resounded across the river. On the way the Swami said to a disciple, "The Master once told me, 'I will go and live wheresoever it will be your pleasure to take me, carrying me on your shoulders—be it under a tree or in the humblest cottage!' With faith in that gracious promise I myself am now carrying him to the site of our future Math. Know for certain, my boy, that so long as his name inspires his followers with his ideals of purity, holiness and loving spirit of charity to all men, even so long shall he, the Master, sanctify the place with his hallowed presence." When the Math was in sight, the Swami spoke of the glorious future which he felt it was to have: "It would be a centre in which would be recognised and practised a grand harmony of all creeds and faiths as exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and only ideas of religion in its universal aspect would be preached. And from this centre of universal toleration would go forth the shining message of good-will and peace and harmony to deluge the whole world." He warned them of the danger of sects in time arising within its fold.

Laying the sacred urn on the special seat spread

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on the Math grounds, the Swami and with him all the others prostrated themselves in fervent salutation before it. After the solemn Pujâ rites he lit the sacrificial fire and performed the Virajâ Homa, at which only the Sannyâsins of the Order could be present. Having himself cooked the Pâyasânnam, or sweetened milk-rice, with the help of his Sannyâsin brethren, he offered it to the Master. This concluded the consecration ceremony. The Swami then addressed the congregation as follows: "Do you all, my brothers, pray to the Lord with all your heart and soul, that He, the Divine Incarnation of the age, may bless this place with His hallowed Presence for ever and ever, and make it a unique centre, a Punyakshetra, of harmony of all the different religions and sects, for the good of the Many, for the happiness of the Many!" All with folded palms, responded to the call by joining in the prayer to the Lord. Then the return procession formed, Sarat Chandra, the Swami's disciple, carrying, at the injunction of his Guru, the sacred urn on his head.

This particular day was a "red letter day" in the history of the Ramakrishna Order. The very atmosphere vibrated with spirituality. The Swami was jubilant, ecstatic. Now, he felt, was accomplished the tremendous task, of finding a permanent place and sufficient means to build a temple for the Master with a monastery for his Gurubhais and the future generations, as the headquarters of the Order, for the perpetuation and propagation of his Master's teachings. He said: "By the will of the Lord is established today His Dharmakshetra. Today I feel free from the weight of the responsibility which I have carried with me for twelve long years. And now a vision comes to my mind! This Math shall become a great centre of learning and Sâdhanâ. Pious householders will



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erect houses for themselves on the grounds round this future religious university and live there, with the Sannyâsins in the centre. To the south, the followers of the Lord from England and America will come and make their abode!" Turning to a disciple, he asked triumphantly, "What do you think of it?" The disciple having reverently expressed his doubt if this "most excellent piece of fancy" would ever be materialised, the Swami cried out, "Fancy, do you say! Hear me, O, you of little faith! Time will fulfil all my expectations. I am now only laying the foundation, as it were. Great things will come later on. I will do my share of the task; and I shall instil into you all the various ideas which you will in the future have to work out! The highest principles and ideals of religion have not only to be studied and comprehended, but brought into the practical field of life. Do you understand?"

A few days later, the same disciple had the privilege of hearing some of the Swami's ideas of the scope and ideals of the Math, and the regulations and disciplines which he wished to be observed there in the future. These have been recorded by the disciple from which the following extracts will be found most suggestive and illuminating, as they outline the Swami's schemes of national education and of philanthropic work in his own country. As he was walking to and fro on the grounds of the new Math he said, pointing to an old cottage:

"There will be the place for the Sâdhus to live in. This Math will be the central institution for the practice of religion and the culture of knowledge. The spiritual force emanating from here will permeate the whole world, turning the currents of men's activities and aspirations into new channels. From here will be disseminated ideals harmonising Jnâna, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma. The time will come when by the mere will of the Sannyâsins of this Math life will vibrate into

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the deadened souls of men. All these visions are rising before me.

“On that land to the south will be the Temple of Learning, modelled after the manner of our ancient Tols. In it will be taught Grammar, Philosophy, Arts, Science, Literature, Rhetoric, Hindu Codes of Law, Scriptures, and English. There the young Brahmachârins will live and study the Sâstras. The Math will provide them with food, clothing, etc. After five years' training these Brahmachârins will be at liberty to return to their homes and lead the householder's life; or, if they prefer, they may take the vow of Sannyâsa with the sanction of the Superiors of the Math. If any of these Brahmachârins are found to be disorderly or of bad character, the Math authorities will have the power to turn them out. Here boys will be taught irrespective of caste or creed. But those who would like to observe the orthodox customs of their respective castes and creeds, will have to separately arrange for their food and so forth. They will attend the classes only in common with the rest. The authorities shall keep a strict watch on their character too. No one will be entitled to admission into the monastic order who has not received his training here. Thus, in course of time, the Math work will be conducted wholly with a personnel drawn from them.”

Disciple: “Then, sir, you mean to re-introduce the old Gurukula system in the country?”

Swamiji: “Why, assuredly, yes! There is no scope whatever in the modern system of education for the unfoldment of the Brahmayidyâ. The old institution of Brahmacharya must be established anew. But its foundation must be laid on a broad basis, and many changes and modifications suited to the needs of the times will have to be introduced into it, of which I shall tell you later on.

“That plot of land adjoining ours in the south should be acquired in time. There will be the Annasatra or a Feeding Home, of the Math, in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, where proper arrangements will be made for serving food to those who are really poor and needy, regarding them as forms of Nârâyana. The scope of its work will be regulated according to the funds at its disposal; it may even be started with two or three people. Enthusiastic Brahmachârins will have to be trained to conduct this Annasatra. They themselves should find means for its support, even by begging from door to door. The Math will not be allowed to lend any pecuniary aid to it. When the

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Brahmachârlins have completed their five years' training in this Home of Service in that way, then only they will have the right of admission into the Temple of Learning branch of the monastery. Thus after ten years of training in all, they will be entitled to enter the Sannyâsa Ashrama after due initiation by the Math authorities,—of course if they have a mind to become Sannyâsins, and if the latter find them fit for it. But the President of the Math may, in the case of some specially gifted Brahmachârlin, waive this rule and give Sannyâsa at any time in spite of this rule. You see I have all these ideas in my head."

Disciple: "Sir, what is the object of establishing these three separate branches in the Math?"

Swamiji: "Don't you see? There should be, first, Annadâna, or the giving of food and other necessities of physical life; next, Vidyâdâna, or the imparting of intellectual knowledge; and, last of all, Jnânadâna, or the conferring of spiritual knowledge. The harmonising of these three aspects which conduce to the making of *Man*, must be the sole duty of the Math. By devoting themselves to the work of the Annasatra in the manner indicated, the idea of working for others by practical means and that of serving humanity in the spirit of worship, will be firmly implanted in the minds of the Brahmachârlins. This will gradually purify their mind, leading to the development of Sâttvic thoughts and aspirations. And such alone are capable of receiving and retaining the Aparâ and the Parâ Vidyâ, the secular and the supreme knowledge and thus become eligible for Sannyâsa. . . ."

Disciple: "Sir, your words encourage me to learn something more of your ideas about the Annasatras and Sevâsramas."

Swamiji: "There should be well-ventilated rooms in these Homes, in each of which two or three of the poor or the diseased would live. They should have comfortable bedding and clean clothes. There should be a doctor for them who would come and see them once or twice a week, or as often as convenient. The Sevâsrama will be a department of the Annasatra, in which the diseased will be nursed and well taken care of. In time, as funds permit, a big kitchen will be built and any number of hungry people will be fed at all times of the day to their hearts' content. None shall be refused under any circumstances. The gruel strained off from the cooked rice, draining into the Ganges will turn its waters white! Oh, how glad at heart I shall be to see an Annasatra working on such a grand scale here!"

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Speaking thus the Swami stood for a while gazing dreamily at the Ganges, as if fathoming the future to see that day. He broke his reverie by saying affectionately to the disciple:

“Who knows when the sleeping lion will be aroused in one or other of you! If the Mother but kindles in the soul of any one of you a spark of Her Divine power, hundreds of such Annasatras will be opened all over the country! Know this, that Jñâna, Bhakti and Sakti *are already* in every living being. It is only the difference in the degree of their manifestation that makes one great or small. It is as if a curtain were drawn between us and that perfection. When that is removed, the whole of Nature is at our feet. Then, whatever we want, whatever we will, will come to pass.

“If the Lord wills, we shall make this Math a great centre of harmony. Our Lord is the visible embodiment of the perfect harmony of all ideals. His throne will remain unshaken in the world of spirituality if we keep alive that ideal of harmony here. We must see to it that people of all sects and creeds, from the Brâhmana down to the Chandâla, will find on coming here their respective ideals manifested. The other day when we installed the image of Sri Ramakrishna on the grounds of this Math, I saw his ideas emanating from here flooding the whole universe with their radiance! I for one am doing and shall do my best to elucidate his broad ideas to all people,—you all also do the same. What avails the mere reading of Vedânta? We have to exemplify the truth of the pure Advaita in practical life. This Advaitavâda has so long been kept hidden in the forests and mountain-caves. It has been given to me to bring it out from seclusion and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society. The sound of the Advaita drum must resound in every hearth and home, in meadows and groves, over hills and plains. Come all of you to my assistance and set yourselves to work.”

Disciple: “But, sir, my mind inclines rather to realise the Advaita state through meditation than to manifest it in action.”

Swamiji: “Why! What is the use of remaining always stupefied in Jadasamâdhi? Under the inspiration of Advaita why not sometimes dance like Siva, and sometimes remain immersed in superconsciousness? Who enjoys a delicacy more,—he who eats it all by himself, or he who shares it with others? Granted that by realising the Atman in meditation you attain Mukti, what of that to the world? We have to take the whole

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universe with us to Mukti! We shall set a conflagration in Mahâmâya's dominions! Then only you will be established in the Eternal Truth. O, what can compare with that Bliss, immeasurable, 'infinite as the skies!' In that state 'you will be speechless, carried beyond yourself, by seeing your own Self in every being that breathes, and in every atom of the universe. When you realise this, you cannot live in this world without treating everyone with exceeding love and compassion. This is indeed practical Vedânta.'"

The great ceremony narrated above was only that of the consecration of the place. The grounds were as yet not in order; the old buildings, previously used as the residential quarters of a boat-building centre, were undergoing considerable additions and alterations, and consequently, were not as yet ready for habitation. Under the Swami's orders the building was begun in April 1898, and though it was pushed through with all haste, it was not completed till the beginning of the following year. An entire upper storey with a verandah facing the Ganges had to be built, and at the same time, the building which contains the refectory of the monks and the chapel of Sri Ramakrishna had to be constructed. It was not until January 2, 1899, that the Math was finally removed from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to what is now called the Belur Math, although on December 9, 1898, the installation ceremony of the image of Sri Ramakrishna had been celebrated in the new monastery and the Swami and several monks lived there from that time on.

## XXXIV

### AMONGST HIS OWN PEOPLE

The Swami was suffering from asthma in these days. On October 27, he had his chest examined, at the request of some of the monks, by the well-known specialist, Dr. R. L. Dutt, who in consultation with some other doctors gave the opinion that the Swami must be careful of himself. A clot of blood was found to have been formed in his left eye, possibly due to tremendous concentration. The monks made efforts constantly to keep him from going into the deeper states of meditation, fearing that the Great and Final Meditation might come upon him at any time, and that he might throw off the body like a worn-out garment. So abstracted was his mind from outward surroundings in these days, that often he would not hear the answer to questions he himself had asked.

Two or three days after the Swami's arrival from Kashmir, a disciple,—whom Swami Brahmananda had instructed to try to bring the Swami down, if possible, from his exalted state,—on entering the room, found him seated cross-legged, facing the east, apparently totally abstracted. It was at this time that the clot of blood was observed in his left eye. When the Swami was asked about it he replied casually, "Oh, it is nothing! It might be due to my intense practice of meditation at Kshir-Bhavani." With the intention of diverting his mind, the disciple begged him to tell the story of his pilgrimage to Amarnath. In telling the tale he suddenly exclaimed, "Ever since I went to Amarnath, Siva Himself has

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entered into my brain. He *will not go!*” After a short silence he went on, “On my way to Amarnath, I climbed up a specially steep ascent, not used by the pilgrims. A sort of determination forced me to travel by that solitary path.” He wanted to be altogether alone, free from all distractions. His whole mind was burning with Siva! He forgot in those moments that he had a body. His personality was filled with a Great Consciousness. “Probably, my boy,” continued the Swami, “the exertion has slightly shaken the system. The sensation of bitter cold there was like innumerable pin-pricks. I also went into the cave with only a loin cloth on, my body being covered only with ashes. At the time I felt neither heat nor cold. On coming out, however, I was benumbed! . . .” The disciple then questioned him as to the legend of the white pigeons which are said to have their abode in the cave of Amarnath, and the sight of which on leaving the shrine grants, the legend holds, the fulfilment of any desire and heightens the merit of the pilgrimage accomplished. The Swami replied: “Yes! Yes! I know! I saw three or four white pigeons, but I could not be sure whether they belonged to the cave or lived in the adjoining hills.”

He spoke of the Divine Voice heard by him at the temple of Kshir-Bhavani. When the disciple sought to explain it away by suggesting that it might be a wholly subjective experience, the echo of intensely powerful thoughts with no objective reality, he gravely remarked: “Whether it be from within yourself, or from some external agency, if you hear with your own ear, *exactly* as you are hearing my words, a voice not connected with any form speaking to you from the skies, will you doubt its reality?”

Later on, the disciple asked the Swami if he had ever seen ghosts and spirits. He replied that the

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spirit of one of his relations had appeared to him now and then bringing news of far-off places. "But," he said, "on enquiry I found that its words were not always true. In a place of pilgrimage I prayed for its emancipation, and since then I have not seen that spirit again."

The Swami was obliged to stay most of the time in Calcutta for treatment, but he did not allow his illness to prevent him from meeting the numerous visitors who flocked to him for instruction. One of his disciples writes of the Swami's activity in those days:

"A gathering was an everyday occurrence when Swamiji used to stay in Calcutta. At every hour of the day, from early morning till eight or nine at night, men would flock to him. This naturally occasioned much irregularity in his meals; so, his Gurubhais and friends desiring to put a stop to this state of things, strongly advised him not to receive visitors except at appointed hours. But the loving heart of Swamiji who was ever ready to go to any length to help others, was so melted with compassion at the sight of the thirst for religion in the people, that in spite of ill-health he did not comply with any request of the kind. His only reply was, 'They take so much trouble to come, walking all the way from their homes, and can I, sitting here, not speak a few words to them, merely because I risk my health a little?' "

The Swami at that time was an embodiment of love. His heart went out to meet everybody. His grace descended upon all, saints and sinners alike. The misery of the world afflicted him terribly. Perhaps he also knew that the time for his final passing away was approaching. So he could not deny his blessings and benediction to anybody. As a result it was found that many persons who apparently led indifferent lives were initiated by him into the mysteries of spirituality. Soon a whisper went round the Math that the Swami was not a proper judge of a man's inner propensities, that one could easily



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satisfy him with a few words of praise. Otherwise how could he give his blessings to men of such worldly propensities? These gossips particularly wounded the feeling of a disciple and he one day, as the Swami was taking his evening stroll in the Math compound, approached him and said, "Well, Swamiji, I have something to ask you." "Yes," said the Swami without turning his head. Then the disciple said, "Much talk is going round the Math that you cannot properly discriminate a right person from a wrong one. You bestow your grace upon everybody without looking into his previous life or inner propensities. As a result we find some of your disciples leading an indifferent life even after receiving your blessings." The Swami suddenly turned his head towards the disciple and exclaimed moved with emotion, "My boy, do you say that I do not know a man! What! When I see a man I not only find out the working of his inner self, but even get a glimpse of his previous life. I know what is going on in his subconscious mind. Even he does not know it. But, then, do you know why I bless such persons? The poor souls have knocked at every gate to get a little peace of mind. But they have been refused everywhere. They have come to me at last. If I, too, refuse them, they will have nothing else to fall back upon. So I do not discriminate. Oh, they are so afflicted! The world is so full of miseries!"

In this he was so like his Master, Sri Ramakrishna!

Sister Nivedita and her school were a constant source of interest to the Swami, and he always endeavoured to make the life she had adopted easier. Sometimes he would ask her to eat with him; he would then prepare special dishes for her, and force her to take them in his presence, for he knew that she

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was then undergoing rigorous austerities, living on a spare diet of milk and fruit and sleeping on a bare board, as the stricter nuns do in the convents of the West. He would now and then ask her to cook delicacies for him, so that she too might partake of them. He would also make others eat a little of the food cooked by her, thus breaking down to a great extent the iron barriers of orthodoxy among his own people with regard to her. And, as for his own orthodox disciples, he was constantly breaking the bonds of meaningless customs and traditions of ages. He would sometimes test their loyalty to him by asking them to partake, as his Prasâd, of some food concerning which orthodoxy cries, "Hands off!" As regards Sister Nivedita, he made every effort to have her accepted by the Hindu society, and was always ready to listen to her in a discussion.

One day, in company with Swami Yogananda and Sarat Chandra, the Swami took the Sister to see the Calcutta Zoological Gardens. The superintendent, Rai Bahadur Ramabrahma Sanyal, hearing of his visit, received him and his party cordially at the entrance, and showed them all the animal-houses. The Swami was desirous of seeing the feeding of the lions and the tigers; that was done for him at the order of the superintendent. The snakes interested him, and he entered into a long discussion on the history of the evolution of reptiles. Next it was the monkey-house. Here one calls to mind, how both in India and in the West, on seeing the almost-human members of this species, he would sometimes address them curiously, saying, "Well, how did you get into that body? What frightful Karma in the past has brought you here?" .

After the partaking of light refreshments a long conversation ensued. The superintendent was a

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student of Botany and Zoology and held strongly to the Darwinian theory of evolution. But the Swami, though admitting Darwin's theory to be sound enough to a certain extent, assailed it with a greater theory, that of Patanjali's "filling in of nature," which, he showed, offered the ultimate solution of the causes of evolution. He pointed out that Patanjali, unlike the Western philosophers, did not believe in 'Struggle for existence,' 'Survival of the fittest,' and 'Natural selection' as causes in the evolution of one species into another. Howsoever true these may be in the lower order of nature, struggle and competition, the Swami held, instead of making for progress, retard the development of human character. Perfection, according to the ancient Hindu sages, is man's real nature; only it is prevented from manifestation by certain obstacles, and when these are removed it manifests itself fully. And it is through education and culture, through meditation and concentration, and, above all, through renunciation and sacrifice that the obstacles are removed. Thus the competitive struggle of sex and food, he maintained, did not apply to the human plane, in its higher aspects; for the sages struggled to grow above and away from nature, to conquer animal instinct, to conquer even the sense of progress and merge the human nature in the Divine.

The superintendent much pleased exclaimed, "Swamiji, that is a wonderful theory! We need in India at the present day more men like you, versed in Eastern and Western philosophy, to point out to our educated community their onesidedness and to correct their fallacies and confusions." The same evening he explained more clearly and elaborately his theory of evolution with special reference to the needs of modern India, to a group of friends and visitors, at Balaram Babu's house.

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To relate it briefly, he said that Darwin's theory is applicable to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, but not to the human kingdom where reason and knowledge are highly developed. In our saints and ideal men we find no trace of struggle whatever, and no tendency to rise higher or grow stronger by the destruction of others. There we find sacrifice instead. The more one can sacrifice the greater is he. The struggle of a rational man is with his internal nature. The more he succeeds in controlling the mind the greater is he. On being questioned, "Why then do you emphasise so much the need of our physical improvement?"—the Swami thundered:

"Are you men? You are no better than animals, satisfied with eating, sleeping and propagating, and haunted by fear! If you had not had in you a little rationality, you would have been turned into quadrupeds by this time! Devoid of self-respect, you are full of jealousy among yourselves, and have made yourselves objects of contempt to foreigners! Throw aside your vain bragging, your theories and so forth, and reflect calmly on the doings and dealings of your everyday life. Because you are governed by animal nature, therefore I teach you to seek for success first in the struggle for existence, and to attend to the building up of your physique, so that you may be able to wrestle all the better with your mind. The physically weak, I say again and again, are unfit for the realisation of the Self! When once the mind is controlled and man is the master of his self, it does not matter whether the body is strong or not, for then he is not dominated by it."

Sleep rarely visited the Swami at this period. His disease kept his brain constantly active, and at frequent intervals in the night and in the early hours of the morning he was awake. He therefore earnestly desired rest, as is evidenced by the following incident. It was an eclipse of the sun. He was at Balaram Babu's house, and had just eaten a meal cooked by a disciple, who was rubbing his feet gently, when suddenly the sound of conch-shells and

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the ringing of bells were heard, announcing the approach of the eclipse. "Well," said the Swami, "the eclipse of the sun has begun. Let me have a nap." Later when the sky had become quite dark, he remarked, "Isn't it an eclipse, indeed!" Then he turned over to sleep. Some time after, he arose and said to the disciple attending on him, "They say a man is rewarded a hundredfold in what he may desire or do during the time of an eclipse. I thought that if I could sleep soundly just a little now, I should get good sleep in the future. But it was not to be. I have slept for about fifteen minutes only. The Divine Mother has not blessed this body with sound sleep."

One of the events of these days, which pleased the Swami greatly, was the starting of the *Udbodhan* as the Bengalee fortnightly organ of the Order. Swami Trigunatita volunteered to be its editor and manager, with a few Brahmachâ rins to help him. A press was bought and the journal made its appearance on January 14, 1899. The Swami gave directions about the lines along which the paper should be conducted. Nothing but *positive* ideas for the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of the race should find place in the magazine. Instead of criticising and finding fault with the thoughts and aspirations of mankind as embodied in the literature, philosophy, poetry, arts, etc., of ancient and modern times, it should point out the way in which they might be made the more conducive to progress. It should never attack or seek to destroy anyone's faith. The highest doctrines of the Vedas and the Vedânta should be presented to the people in the simplest way, so that by diffusing true culture and knowledge it might in time be able to raise the Chandâla to the status of the Brâhmana. It should stand for universal harmony as preached by Sri Ramakrishna, and scatter

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his ideals of love, purity and renunciation. The untiring zeal and perseverance, marked by wonderful self-denial, with which Swami Trigunatita laboured for the success of the journal was most exemplary, and, as the Swami remarked, only an unselfish Sannyâsin could do such heroic work.

It was on December 16, that the Swami announced to the monks that he would go for a short change to Vaidyanath, and that later on, probably in the summer, he would again visit Europe and America. The Swami insisted constantly on the necessity of performing works of service and of mercy, and aroused in the monks the desire to consecrate their lives to this ideal. On December 19, the Swami, attended by Harendra Nath, a Brahmachâri disciple, left for Vaidyanath, where he was the guest of Babu Priyanath Mukherjee. Here he busied himself with private studies, in writing letters, and in taking much exercise, spending long hours in walking. He was much alone those days, and removed from all public and business concerns, his mind tended to the meditative state, however much he tried to force himself to rest. On the whole, his health was bad, and here, for a time, complications arose. A violent form of asthma set in, causing him severe discomfort. In one of the asthmatic attacks he was almost suffocated; those who stood about him feared that the time had come for him to leave his body.

It was at the house of the same gentleman, when he was staying with Swami Niranjanananda, that while out for a walk one day, they found a man lying helpless on the roadside, in the cold of winter, suffering from acute dysentery. The poor man had only a rag on, and that too was soiled, and he was crying with pain. The Swami wondered how he could help him. He himself was only a guest. How could he take such

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a patient there without his host's knowledge and consent? But he must do so, at any cost ! With the help of his Gurubhai he gently raised the sufferer to his feet, and both lending their support brought him slowly to the house. There they cleansed and clothed his body, and put hot fomentations on him. The two Gurubhais nursed the sick man back to recovery. The host, instead of being vexed, was lost in admiration, and realised that the heart of Vivekananda was as great as his intellect !

During the Swami's absence from Calcutta, the Holy Mother visited the new monastery on December 20, 1898. On January 2, 1899, the Math was finally removed entirely from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to its present quarters. Sister Nivedita, on the invitation of the monks, gave a series of lessons to the Brahmachârlins on Physiology, Botany, Arts and Painting, and on the Kindergarten system. The Swami was kept regularly informed of the movements of his Gurubhais and of the work at the monastery by letters sent to him almost daily at Vaidyanath.

Among the many epistles which he wrote during this period, that written to a certain Bengalee woman-disciple, is particularly interesting, as it gives glimpses of his ideas on the origin of custom, widow-marriage, liberty, and the psychology of the religious consciousness. It reads in part as follows :

"Some very important questions have been raised in your letter. . . .

"(1) Rishi, Muni, or God—none has the power to force an institution on society. When the needs of the times press hard on it, society adopts certain customs for self-preservation. Rishis have only recorded those customs. As a man often resorts even to such means as are good for immediate self-protection, but which are very injurious in the future, so also, society not infrequently saves itself for the time being, but these

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immediate means which contributed to its preservation turn out to be terrible in the long run.

“For example, take the prohibition of widow-marriage in our country. Don’t think that Rishis or wicked men introduced the law pertaining to it. Notwithstanding the desire of men to keep women completely under their control, they never could succeed in introducing those laws without betaking themselves to the aid of a social necessity of the time. Of this custom two points should be specially observed:

“(a) Widow-marriage takes place among the lower classes.

“(b) Among the higher classes the number of women is greater than that of men.

“Now, if it be the rule to marry every girl, it is difficult enough to get one husband apiece; then how to get, by and by, two or three for each? Therefore has society put one party under disadvantage, *i.e.*, it does not let her have a second husband, who has had one; if it did, one maid would have to go without a husband. On the other hand, widow-marriage obtains in communities having a greater number of men than women, as in their case the objection stated above does not exist. It is becoming more and more difficult in the West too for unmarried girls to get husbands.

“Similar is the case with the caste system, and other social customs.

“So, if it be necessary to change any social custom, the *necessity* underlying it should be found out first of all, and by altering it, the custom will die of itself. Otherwise, no good will be done by condemnation or praise.

“(2) Now the question is, is it for the good of the public at large that social rules are framed, or society is formed? Many reply to this in the affirmative; some again may hold that it is not so. Some men, being comparatively powerful, slowly bring all others under their control, and by stratagem, force, or adroitness, gain their own objects. If this be true, what can be the meaning of the statement, that there is danger in giving liberty to the ignorant? What, again, is the meaning of liberty?

“Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth, etc., by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others; and all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge. The second question is, those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, *i.e.*,



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full right to their body, wealth, etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge like those of the rich and highly situated, they would be perverse,—do they say this for the good of the society, or blinded by their selfishness? In England, too, I have heard, ‘Who will serve us, if the lower classes get education?’

“For the luxury of a handful of the rich let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset! !

“Who constitute society? The millions, or you, I and a few others of the upper classes?

“Again, even if the latter be true, what ground is there for our vanity that we lead others? Are we omniscient? उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम् ‘Raise self by self.’ Let each one work out one’s own salvation. It is freedom in every way, *i.e.*, advance towards Mukti is the worthiest gain of man. To advance towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supreme prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom. . . .”

This letter reveals the many-sidedness of the Swami’s character. He was as much a sociologist as a religious teacher.

Among the many important letters that he had received from distinguished Indians during his last stay in Calcutta, the one from the great millionaire-philanthropist of Bombay, Sir Jamsetji N. Tata, is worth quoting here, even though the contents of the Swami’s reply to this significant note are not in the hands of the Brotherhood:

“Dear Swami Vivekananda,

“I trust you remember me as a fellow-traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

“I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of Research Institute of Science for India, of which you have

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doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by this spirit, where they should live with ordinary decency, and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic. I am of opinion that if such a crusade in favour of an asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science, and the good name of our common country; and I know not who would make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekananda. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanising into life our ancient traditions in this respect? Perhaps, you had better begin with a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter. I should cheerfully defray all the expenses of publication.

“With kind regards, I am, dear Swami,

“23rd. November, 1898.

Yours faithfully,

“Esplanade House, Bombay.

Jamsetji N. Tata”

The Swami remained at Vaidyanath until the last days of January, 1899. On February 3, he is seen once more in the companionship of his Gurubhais and disciples, carrying on the task of training them for the firm establishment of that mission for which he had been born.

The Swami, it must be remembered, was always busy training consciously or unconsciously his Sannyâsin and Brahmachârin disciples in various ways. Now, it would be that they should cook for him,—himself an excellent cook,—or execute his orders with exactitude and promptness. In the way of discipline he was most rigorous and exacting, so that they might learn the greatest accuracy, and following the example of the great Pavhari Baba, concentrate on even the simplest acts of life. In this connection he once said, “He who knows how even to fill a Chillum of tobacco properly, knows also how to meditate. And he who cannot cook well, cannot be a perfect Sannyâsin. Unless cooking is performed with a pure

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mind and concentration, the food is not palatable. Or, he would train some of the disciples with the design of making them preachers. He would ask them to stand up and speak extempore before him and a group of Sannyâsins and householders. Sometimes, they would be shy, but he would insist, and tell them the story of how Sri Ramakrishna had once given him sound advice as to the overcoming of shyness. "Think," said Sri Ramakrishna, "of the men before you as worms,—as the old proverb runs!" Once warmed up to the subject, the disciples would speak fluently, now on the Upanishads, now on Jnâna or Bhakti, or again on the necessity of Sraddhâ, renunciation, and so forth. He would always encourage them with cheers, or with saying "Well done!" at the end of a speech. Of Swami Suddhananda, he said, "In time he will be an excellent speaker!" Again to the same Swami he said one day, by way of encouragement, being satisfied at one of his works, "You are the beloved son in whom I am pleased." He always used to extol to the highest even the smallest merit of his followers.

A remarkable characteristic of the Swami was, that he made all who were about him feel great and equal to brave or dare anything. Success or failure on their part, would elicit from him nothing but approbation and encouragement; for he judged his Gurubhais and his disciples, not by their actual achievements but by the spirit which actuated them. Enough, if they had dared and done their best! He would throw them into water beyond their depth, figuratively speaking, to make them learn to swim. He had infinite faith in the possibilities of the human soul, and would inspire them with a fire and an eloquence which were simply irresistible. He told them that they were as capable of inspiration as he himself. He could see an

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atom of goodness in the disciple magnified to a mountain, and the mountains of faults and failings but as mere atoms! In such a relationship, every word spoken, every thought, every act attempted or accomplished, every purpose grasped or uncomprehended, became charged with power and vision. Such was the spirit in the Math in those days.

The internal affairs of the Math were perfectly organised by Swami Saradananda, who had been called back from America by the Swami especially for that purpose. Even though he knew that the former was just at the height of his usefulness and possibilities there, he thought it a greater and more urgent duty to have the work of the headquarters organised and some of the younger members trained for the life of the preacher, by one who had made himself acquainted with Western needs and temperaments, and with Western methods of organisation. Besides, he knew that the work in America would not suffer; for Swami Abhedananda was working there with untiring zeal and surprising success. Since his arrival at the Math at the beginning of February 1898, Swami Saradananda gave himself up to his task with great devotion. Everything went on like clock-work and with great enthusiasm. Question-classes and classes for the study of the Sanskrit language and of Eastern and Western philosophies were conducted regularly by him and by Swami Turiyananda, and meditation classes were held daily. The business part of the Math was entrusted to the younger members. This was initiated at the instance of the Swami, as he held that unless they were given independence and the right of self-government in their sphere, with responsibilities to shoulder, they would never learn to stand on their own feet and work wholeheartedly for the cause. They formed themselves

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into a body, electing a superintendent from among themselves for every month, who was responsible for the efficient carrying out of all the daily duties and demands of the Math. On the principle of division of labour the superintendent assigned to every fellow-disciple his duties, had a reserve force to meet emergencies, and allowed some in turn to devote themselves entirely to Tapasyâ. He had to see that all work was done properly and in time, that everything was kept neat and clean and in its place, and that the sick members were nursed, and so on. It was a delight to the Swami to see both before he left the Math in the early part of the year 1898, and after he returned in October, that the organisation of the Math was so satisfactory.

The Swami is seen in these days pre-eminently in his monastic aspect, constantly teaching his disciples the ideals and practice of the monastic life. Gathering them together whenever the mood came upon him, he would instruct them on the duties of their life, impress upon them the responsibilities of the great vow they had taken, and put before them its glories and possibilities. He would often say, "Brahmacharya should be like a burning fire within the veins!" Or, "Remember, the ideal is the freedom of the Soul and service to all." Life of Sannyâsa meant to him, renunciation of the personal for the universal good, till the personal was merged in the impersonal. He made ideals so intensely practical and living that one never thought of them as abstractions. He held that nothing was impossible for one who had faith in himself. He would point out:

"The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man loses faith in himself, death comes."

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“Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work. Buddha gave himself for the animals. Make yourselves fit agents to work. But it is God who works, not you. One man contains within him the whole universe. One particle of matter has all the energy of the universe at its back. In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart.”

In one of the congregations of disciples the talk drifted to the Adhikârivâda, or the doctrine of special rights and privileges, and the Swami spoke in unmeasured terms against it and the evils that have resulted from it. He said, that the highest truths should be given to one and all alike without any distinction. His disciples should be bold enough to give out the truth unequivocally and fearlessly without caring for the prevailing customs of the people and of the country.

“No compromise! No whitewashing!” he cried out, “No covering of corpses with flowers! . . . This attempt at compromise proceeds from arrant, downright cowardice. Be bold! My children should be brave, above all. Not the least compromise on any account. Preach the highest truths broadcast. Do not be afraid of losing your respect, or of causing unhappy friction. Rest assured that if you serve Truth in spite of temptations to forsake It, you will attain a heavenly strength, in the face of which men will quail to speak before you things which you do not believe to be true. People would be convinced by what you say to them, if you can strictly serve Truth for fourteen years continually, without swerving from It. Thus you will confer the greatest blessing on the masses, unshackle their bondages and uplift the whole nation.”

Or quoting Bhartrihari he would exclaim: “Let sages praise thee, or let the world blame. Let fortune itself come, or let poverty and rags stare thee in the face. Eat the herbs of the forest, one day, for food; and the next day, share a banquet of fifty courses. Looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, follow thou on!”

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Again and again he would say that only a great monk can be a great worker. "Only the unimpassioned and unattached do most for the world" he would say. "Who can claim to be a greater worker than Buddha or Christ?" In the Swami's eyes there was no work which was secular. All work was sacred. All work was worship. "We must combine the practicality and the culture of the finest citizenship with the love of poverty, purity and thorough renunciation that characterise the true monk and man of God!"

In discussing the character of service which the monks should take up, he would speak of the feeding of the poor, relief in times of famine, nursing the sick, directing the sanitation of an infected town, founding orphanages and hospitals and centres of education and training,—all of which have since become integral elements in the work and life of the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. In the monastery itself, besides leading the spiritual and intellectual life, they were also to acquaint themselves, theoretically and practically, with music, gardening, the keeping of animals, and so forth. And he himself, setting an example, would often experiment in the sinking of a well or cooking and baking, or teaching them choral singing. He would insist on physical exercise, saying, "I want sappers and miners in the army of religion! So, boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles! For ascetics, mortification is all right! For workers, well-developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel!" Study, also, was required in order that the monks might, through their learning, develop well-reasoned judgment on the adjustment between the social and spiritual needs of the times and the best way to bring about an exchange of the highest ideals between the East and the West.

The Swami was never tired of impressing upon

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the minds of his monastic disciples that renunciation with unbroken Brahmacharya was the only key to Illumination, to the realisation of the Highest. The life of the monk was a continuous struggle, a warfare with the internal nature. As such, he must practise intense Tapasyâ, self-control and concentration if he aspired to victory. Nothing pleased him so much as to see some one of them devoting himself to austerities and meditation in solitude. Once he turned fiercely upon someone, who had put to him a worldly question, with the remark, "Go and perform Tapasyâ for some time in order to purify your mind, and then you will not ask such perverse questions!"

The Swami insisted that in their preparatory stage his disciples must submit themselves to strict discipline, and scrupulously observe the regulations about food and other external restrictions enjoined on the Brahmachârins. On the night of December 16, before he left for Vaidyanath, he held a long meeting at the monastery, in which he gave instructions to the younger members concerning the regulation of food, and particularly about eating sparingly at night. Knowing the importance of the action of food on the mind, he said, "Without control over food the control of the mind is impossible. Over-eating causes much evil. Both body and mind are ruined by over-eating!" In their state of spiritual development they were not to eat food touched by non-Hindus. In this preparatory stage they should have Nishthâ without being narrow-minded and bigoted. They should keep firmly to the life of Brahmacharya. But if, at any time, they found themselves unable to adhere to the high ideals and rigorous discipline of Sannyâsa, they should be free to return to the householder's life. This was a much more desirable and manly step than to lead a hypo-



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critical life and bring degradation on themselves and disgrace to the Order. They were to rise early, meditate and perform their religious duties systematically, and be particularly mindful of Tapasyâ. They should take special care of their health, and be punctual as to the time of meals and other personal necessities. Their conversation at all times should be on religious subjects. As in Western monasteries, they were not even to read newspapers during a certain period of their training. They were not to mix freely with householders. On this point, charging them, one day in the month of May, in a fever of monastic passion, he exclaimed:

“The men of the world should have no voice in the affairs of the Math. The Sannyâsin should have nothing to do with the rich, his duty is with the poor. He should treat the poor with loving care, and serve them joyfully with all his might. To pay respects to the rich and hang on to them for support, has been the bane of all the monastic communities of our country. A true Sannyâsin should scrupulously avoid that. Such a conduct becomes a public woman rather than one who professes to have renounced the world. How should a man immersed in Kâma-Kâñchana (lust and greed), become a true devotee of one whose central ideal was the renunciation of Kâma-Kâñchana? Sri Ramakrishna wept and prayed to the Divine Mother to send him such a one to talk with, as would not have in him the slightest tinge of Kâma-Kâñchana, for he would say, ‘My lips burn when I talk with the worldly-minded.’ He also used to say that he could not even bear the touch of the worldly-minded and the impure. That King of Sannyâsins can never be preached by men of the world. The latter can never be perfectly sincere, for they cannot but have some selfish motives to serve. If God incarnates Himself as a householder, I can never believe Him to be sincere. When a householder takes the position of the leader of a religious sect, he begins to serve his own interests in the name of principle, hiding the former in the garb of the latter, and the result is, that the sect becomes in time rotten to the core. All religious movements headed by householders have shared the same fate. Without renunciation religion can never stand.”

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After his return from Vaidyanath the Swami framed certain rules for his young disciples in order to guard them from the least touch of worldliness, or contact with worldly-minded people. The latter should not, out of familiarity, sit or lie on the Sâdhus' beds, or sit at meals with them, and so on. To a disciple he said:

"Nowadays I feel a sort of disagreeable smell of lust in the bodies and clothes of worldly people. I had read of it in the Sâstras and now I find why it is that men of purity and renunciation cannot bear the touch or the association of the worldly-minded. With right rigour and wisdom the Sâstras enjoin Brahmachârin to remain absolutely aloof from not only women but also even from those who associate with women. When the Brahmachârin become firmly established in the ideals of Sannyâsa, there is no harm in their mixing with householders."

But it is not to be supposed from the above, that the Swami was a hater of householders or of women. He would not allow the younger members of the Math to live even in the Holy Mother's retreat in Calcutta for the purpose of serving her,—whom he adored as greatly as he did Sri Ramakrishna,—just because it was like a women's Math where women-devotees lived and many ladies came to pay their respects to the Holy Mother and to be taught by her. There was the instance of his rating a young Brahmachârin of blameless character, whom he found there after returning from Kashmir, and of his appointing an aged but energetic disciple in his place.

The Swami was not blind to the great virtues and ideals of the householder's life, and he counted among his best friends men and women, whose lives he held up as examples even to his monastic followers. He would often say, "I understand the greatness of the ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and serve, eager to earn righteously and spend bene-

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volently and ever striving to order his life after a spiritual ideal. Marriage may be the path, in fact, the only path, for certain souls, but he who has adopted the monastic life should know that everything in the world is fraught with fear. Renunciation alone can make one fearless. My boys, you must appropriate the greatness of the householder's ideal.

“Our ideal of service to the world must be like that of the householder as taught in the parable of the birds. On seeing that two weary travellers, who had come beneath the forest tree in which they rested, had nothing to eat, the birds cast themselves into the fire lighted by the travellers in order to furnish them with food, because they thought that it was their duty as householders to do so.” Teaching the members of the Order in this way he infused into them a spirit, in which the highest service was made one with the highest of meditation.

Sometimes in a mood of remonstrance he would exclaim, “Say, what work shall I do in your country! Everyone here wants to lead, and none to obey. In the doing of great works, the commands of the leader have to be implicitly obeyed. If my Gurubhais tell me now that I have to pass the rest of my life in cleansing the drain of the Math, know, for certain, that I shall obey that order without a word of protest. He only can be a great commander who knows how to obey, without a word of murmur, that which is for the general good.” One is reminded here of that same readiness and utter self-abandonment in obedience, which the founders of the Western monastic orders demanded of their followers. To order the planting of cabbages with the heads downwards, or to remove a heap of stones from one place to another and then back again, as many times as ordered with-

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out asking the reason why, was one of Saint Francis of Assisi's methods of testing his disciples. The will of the individual must be trained; only in that way, the Swami held, could the strength of a monastic organisation be maintained.

The Swami was sometimes tempted to give way to despair and think his life a failure, since there did not come to him "Two thousand enthusiastic youths" to be trained as Sannyâsin workers ready to give their lives for the spiritual regeneration of their motherland,—and the "Three hundred million rupees," for, he used to say, that with these at his command, he could solve all of India's problems and set her on her feet! "However," he said, "I will do the very best myself, and infuse my spirit in others to continue the work. No rest for me! I shall die in harness! I love action! Life is a battle, and one must always be in action, to use a military phrase. Let me live and die in action!"

One evening, while pacing to and fro, restless with the greatness of his thought, he suddenly stopped and exclaimed to a Sannyâsin disciple: "Listen, my boy! Sri Ramakrishna came and gave his life for the world; I also will sacrifice my life; you also, every one of you, should do the same. All these works are only a beginning. Believe me, from the shedding of our life-blood will arise gigantic heroes and warriors of God, who will revolutionise the whole world!" And he would often charge his disciples with the words, "Never forget, service to the world and the realisation of God are the ideals of the monk! Stick to them! The monastic is the most immediate of paths! Between the monk and his God there are no idols! 'The Sannyâsin stands on the head of the Vedas!' say the Vedas, for he is free from churches and sects and religions and prophets and scriptures!"

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He is the visible God on earth ! Remember this, and go thou thy way, Sannyâsin bold, carrying the banner of renunciation,—the banner of peace, of freedom, of blessedness."

When the Swami returned to Calcutta he used to live sometimes in the new monastery and sometimes at Balaram Babu's house. Though his health was still broken, he came with new plans and an invigorated spirit. Vaidyanath had done him some good inasmuch as it had given him rest. The very day after his return he held a meeting of his brother-monks, telling them that they must now be prepared to go forth, as did the followers of Buddha, and preach the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna to the people of India. Accordingly, that very day he called Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda, his disciples, and instructed them to proceed at once to Dacca in Eastern Bengal. The former of them humbly protested, saying, "Swamiji, what shall I preach, I know nothing !" "Then, go and preach that !" exclaimed the Swami. "That in itself is a great message !" But the disciple, still unconvinced, prayed that he might be allowed to practise further Sâdhanâs and attain Realisation first, for his own salvation. The Swami thereupon thundered at him saying, "You will go to hell if you seek your own salvation ! Seek the salvation of others if you want to reach the Highest ! Kill out the desire for personal Mukti ! That is the greatest of all Sâdhanâs." And he added sweetly, "Work, my children, work with your whole heart and soul ! That is the thing. Mind not the fruits of work. What if you go to hell itself working for others ? That is better than winning heaven through self-sought salvation !" Afterwards he called these two disciples, bidding them to come into the worship-room of the monastery. The three sat in meditation, the Swami

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entering the deeper states thereof. Then, he solemnly said, "Now I shall infuse my Sakti, my Power into you! The Lord Himself shall be at your back!" That whole day he was most loving to these two disciples, and gave them private instructions concerning what they should preach and what Mantras they should give to such as might desire to be initiated. Thus specially blessed by their Guru, they left for Dacca on February 4. The Swami, moreover, commissioned two of his Gurubhais, Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda, to preach in Guzerat, and they set out on their journey three days later.

It was the Swami's great desire that the Vedas and other Sâstras should be studied at the Math. From the time the monastery was removed to Nilambar Mukherjee's Garden, he had started with the help of his Gurubhais regular classes on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedânta Sûtras, the Gita, the Bhâgavata and other scriptures, and had himself taught for a time Panini's Ashtâdhyâyi. Now he busied himself with a comprehensive study of Sanskrit scriptures and literature. And it was in these days that he composed his two great Sanskrit poems on Sri Ramakrishna, one of which is now daily sung at the Arati, evening service, at the Ramakrishna monasteries.

During this period many came from far and near to see the Swami, and constant discussion on religion and philosophy and on the ways and means of material and national improvement went on, recalling the days at Seal's Garden. But the most memorable was the visit of Nâg Mahasaya, who came all the way from his distant village-home at Deobhog, in the district of Dacca, to the new Math. It was like the coming together of two great forces, one represent-

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ing the highest type of the ancient householder's ideal and the other, the ideal of a new type of monasticism,—one mad with God-intoxication, the other intoxicated with the idea of bringing out the Divine in man,—but both one in the vision of Sannyâsa and Realisation! An account of the meeting will convey to the reader some idea of their mutual appreciation.

After saluting each other Nag Mahasaya exclaimed, "Jaya Sankara! Blessed am I to see before me the living Siva!" and remained standing before the Swami, with folded hands. On being asked about his health he said, "What is the use of enquiring about a worthless lump of flesh and bones! I feel blissful at seeing Siva Himself!" With these words he fell prostrate before the Swami, who at once raised him up. At this time the Upanishad class was being held. The Swami addressing his disciples said, "Let the class be stopped. Come and see Nag Mahasaya." When all had seated themselves around the great devotee, the Swami said, "Look! He is a householder, but he has no consciousness of whether he has a body or not, of whether the universe exists or not! He is always absorbed in the thought of God! He is a living example of what man becomes when he attains Supreme Bhakti." Turning to Nag Mahasaya he requested him to tell them something of Sri Ramakrishna, but he with his characteristic humility replied: "What shall I say! I am too unworthy to speak of Him! I have only come to purify myself with the sight of Mahâvira who is His complement in the Divine play (Lilâ) of the Lord in His Incarnation as Sri Ramakrishna. Victory be to Him! Victory be to Him!" The Swami remarked, "You have truly known what our Master was; we are only beating about the bush!" Whereupon Nag Mahasaya

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broke forth in protest, "Pray, do not speak such meaningless words. You are the shadow of Sri Ramakrishna; He and you are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin! Let him see who has the eyes to see!"

After some talk the Swami said to him, "It would be so good if you would come and live at the Math. These boys will have a living example before them to mould their lives after. The great Bhakta replied in a mood of resignation, "I once asked the Master's permission to give up the world. He said, 'Live in the world.' So I am following his command, and come occasionally to be blessed with the sight of you all, his children." Then the following dialogue ensued between them:

Swamiji: "Now my only wish is to awaken the country. This great giantess is as if sleeping, having lost all faith in her own strength,—sleeping, dead to all outward appearance. If we can awaken her once more to the consciousness of her infinite strength in the Sanâtana Dharma, then our Lord and we shall not have been born in vain! Only that one desire remains; Mukti and the like seem like trash before it! Do bless me that I may succeed."

Nag Mahasaya: "The Lord is ever blessing you! Who can check your will? Your will and His are one. Jaya Ramakrishna!"

Swamiji: "Oh, if only I had had a strong body, so needful for work! See, how since my coming back to India, my health is impaired, frustrating all my plans of work. In Europe and America I was so well."

Nag Mahasaya: "Living in a body, as the Master used to say, one has to pay taxes in the shape of disease and affliction. But yours is a chest of gold sovereigns, and so it has to be guarded with vigilant



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care. Alas, who will do that! Who will understand what it means to the world!"

Swamiji: "Everyone in the Math looks after me with great love and care."

Nag Mahasaya: "Blessed are they that serve you, for thus they are doing good not only to themselves but to the world at large, whether they understand it or not!"

It is impossible to express in writing the manner and the spirit in which Nag Mahasaya spoke these words of appreciation of the Swami. To the outside world they may well appear too fulsome and theatrical, and even blasphemous; but they will strike one, who knew that godly soul, as spontaneous and coming out of his deepest conviction. And those who were present at the meeting, found it difficult to check tears of emotion,—for Nag Mahasaya had the rare power of breathing his thoughts and yearnings, by a few simple words, or even by a mere look, into the soul of his hearers, until the tenderest feeling became living and vibrant!

The four preachers sent out by the Swami did excellent work in the various cities they visited. Everywhere they found great missionary opportunities for the spread of the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, which appealed directly to all hearts, mainly because of its simplicity and directness. Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda started, at the earnest desire of the citizens of Dacca, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission there. Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda made a tour of the cities in Kathiawar, and were enthusiastically welcomed by devoted admirers of the Swami, whom they found everywhere. By their lectures and talks on Vedânta the Swamis created a profound impression on the minds of the citizens of that distant province. After three months of preach-

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ing and teaching the four missionaries returned to the monastery at the call of the Swami who was rejoiced to hear the reports of their success.

It will be interesting to note here how the movement initiated by the Swami in India and abroad, was being carried on by his co-workers whom he had inspired with the ideal of practising and preaching the Vedânta. In doing so, one sees four prominent features which characterised it at the close of the last century. Firstly, the propaganda of the Vedânta by individual Sannyâsins of the Order; secondly, the founding of monastic centres; thirdly, the starting of temporary centres for the relief of distress in times of famine, plague, etc.; and fourthly, the establishment of permanent asylums for orphans.

To recapitulate the ground already covered: We have seen the inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, the establishment of the Math in Belur as the permanent headquarters of the Order and its organization on a solid basis, the starting of the centre and the work of preaching by Swami Ramakrishnananda in Madras, the opening of the Girls' School by Sister Nivedita at Calcutta, the sending out of four preachers to Guzerat and Eastern Bengal, and the Vedânta work carried on by Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda in England and America up to the end of 1896. We have mentioned the famine relief operations conducted by Swami Akhandananda in the District of Murshidabad in 1897, and the sanitary work initiated in 1898 in connection with the plague epidemic in Calcutta.

The Ramakrishna Mission held its weekly sittings in Calcutta regularly throughout 1897. Under its auspices public meetings also were held frequently at which Sister Nivedita and Swami Saradananda often delivered lectures. Swami Ramakrishnananda deli-

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vered several lectures and ably conducted as many as eleven classes a week in different parts of the city of Madras under the auspices of different societies. He also visited various other cities of the Presidency to carry on the Vedânta work there.

About the middle of 1897, the Swami deputed Swami Sivananda to work in Ceylon, in response to an appeal for a teacher made by the leading Hindu communities to him while he had been there. Besides arousing an interest in the Vedânta philosophy among the Tamil and the Sinhalese population there, the Swami opened classes for the teaching of Râja Yoga and the Gita, the latter of which was attended by several Europeans also. One of them, Mrs. Pickett, to whom he gave the name of Hari Priyâ, was especially trained by him so as to qualify her to teach the Vedânta to Europeans. He sent her with his authority to Australia and New Zealand to prepare the way for a teacher of the Vedânta there. She made a tour of both countries, interested earnest students in her cause and opened classes in Adelaide, S. Victoria and Nelson.

Swami Abhayananda, the first Sannyâsin disciple of Swami Vivekananda in America, after nearly four years of brilliant preaching and teaching in Chicago and other cities, came to India in March 1899, and delivered stirring and learned lectures in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Dacca, Mymensing and Barisal.

The idea and the necessity of starting a monastery in a cool, secluded region of the Himalayas where the East and the West could meet on an equal footing of love and unity, exchange the highest ideals of each, and practise the Advaita philosophy, were much in the Swami's thought. He had written to a friend that this monastery must be about 7,000 feet above sea-level,

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as he did not want to kill his Western disciples, who would come to work in India for the furtherance of his cause, by forcing on them the Indian mode of living in the fiery heat of the plains. On his tours he had himself looked for a suitable site in the hills in and about Dharmasala, Murree, Srinagar, Dehra-Dun and the town of Almora, but none answered the purpose satisfactorily. At length, when he went to Kashmir, he left the matter in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who, in the company of Swami Swarupananda made a tour into the interior of the Almora District, and in the course of an extensive and diligent search, came upon the beautiful estate of Mayavati with its thickly-wooded hills at an elevation of 6,800 feet and fifty miles from Almora and commanding a magnificent view of the snow ranges. They decided it at once to be *the* spot for their cherished scheme of starting the Advaita Ashrama and of finding a permanent home for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The purchase was promptly made and they came to make it their retreat on March 19, 1899, which happened to be the auspicious birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. The Advaita Ashrama was founded with the heart-felt blessings of the Swami and under his guidance, and the Press was removed thither.

It is not too much to say that the Advaita Ashrama is the most unique of all the institutions started under the inspiration of the Swami, as the following lines which he wrote to the joint-founders of the Ashrama setting forth its ideal and principles, will show:

“In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of man; knowing Him, and therefore the Universe, as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to infinite freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being of individuals or

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numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth,—*The Oneness of All Beings*. 'Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom.

"Hitherto it has not been possible to preach this Noble Truth entirely free from the settings of dualistic weakness; this alone, we are convinced, explains why it has not been more operative and useful to mankind at large.

"To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

"Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone."

Here there is no external worship of images, pictures or symbols of God, nor any religious ceremony or ritual except the Virajâ Homa—not even the worship of his own Master, which is the central feature in the other monastic centres.

Before he left on his second visit to the West, the Swami in compliance with a request sent four of his disciples to help in the work of the Ashrama. Accordingly, within a week of his departure, Swamis Sachchidananda (senior), Virajananda and Vimalananda, and the Brahmachâri Harendra Nath left the Belur Math to take up enthusiastically their new duties, which were mainly the construction of a building for the monks, road-making and agricultural work and helping in the publication of the journal.

Besides these institutions now firmly established, the three magazines already mentioned, namely, the *Brahmavadin* of Madras, the *Prabuddha Bharata* of Almora, and the *Udbodhan* of Calcutta, started either

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under the auspices or under the direct control and guidance of the Swami and conducted by his Gurubhais and disciples, did a vast amount of educational work in India and abroad. They spread far and wide his ideas and those of his Master. They brought out, vindicated and interpreted the thoughts and ideals of the ancient Indian sages and philosophers. They published the reports of the various activities of the members of the Order, and also brought out their writings and lectures.

Turning now to the Vedânta movement carried on in the West during the Swami's absence, we notice that Swami Abhedananda who had taken charge of the classes in London continued them ably, and daily added to his own power as a teacher. Owing to the urgent and repeated calls from the Vedânta Society of New York for a Swami to take charge of the centre, he was obliged to leave for America in the latter part of July 1897, after working for some ten months in London, and the classes which he had been conducting had to be temporarily suspended, though the work was never at a standstill. The disciples of the Swami and many other students interested in the Vedânta, continued to meet in small groups, and helped each other and themselves by readings, talks and discussions, with unabated zeal, looking forward to Swami Vivekananda's return to them at no distant future.

It is well-nigh impossible to give here a full and systematic account of the wide-spread propaganda carried on by Swamis Saradananda, Abhedananda and Abhayanaanda in America. These missionaries of the Vedânta successfully carried their gospel through many of the principal States, making their headquarters in Boston, New York and Chicago, and the influential newspapers, often contained eloquent

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editorials expressive of appreciation of their lectures and admiration for their personalities.

Swami Saradananda, as previously mentioned, was called back by the Swami to help his Indian work, especially in organising the chief monastery at Belur and training the disciples there as preachers for the West. He left New York for India on January 12, 1898, after about two years of incessant preaching.

Swami Abhedananda visited many cities of the U. S. A., delivering lectures and holding regular classes. He then established himself in New York, where he opened regular classes on Yoga and meditation, which were attended by earnest students.

To an occasional attendant at his classes the growth of interest was unmistakable in steadily increasing audiences of intelligent persons, many of them members of orthodox churches, with a representation of well-known persons in public life.

During this first period of his work, the Swami Abhedananda met many representative thinkers in the world of art, science and religion, both in private life and in social gatherings, and by his unfailing courtesy and readiness in answering questions he awakened their friendly interest in his mission and teachings. One of the most liberal and enlightened of New York clergymen even went so far as to distribute the Swami's lecture programmes among his congregation, advising them to go and listen to his teachings.

The Swami had delivered eighty-six lectures in Mott's Memorial Hall alone. As the foregoing will show, he made a splendid record of arduous work well done, and secured the lasting esteem of all who had come within the sphere of his influence. Several of the best journals of the State, such as *The Sun*, *The*

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*New York Tribune, The Critic, The Literary Digest, The Times, The Intelligence, and The Mind*, published throughout appreciative accounts of his teaching and his personality.

On Easter Sunday, Swami Abhedananda initiated four Brahmachârlins. During the summer he left New York to visit Worcester, Boston, Cambridge and other New England points and met many able and influential persons. Among others were Mr. Edison, the great inventor; Joseph Jefferson, the famous actor; William Dean Howells, the novelist; and professors in Cornell, Iowa, Yale and other universities.

No less active was Swami Abhayananda in preaching the gospel of the Vedânta in the United States, with her characteristic zeal and energy. Within four weeks the power of her teaching had been so strongly felt that men and women of intelligence and of high social standing gathered round her, and urged upon her to establish herself at Chicago. She accordingly founded the Advaita Society.

Thus one sees that the seeds sown by Swami Vivekananda on the American soil went on growing vigorously as days passed, striking their roots deep down into the heart of the nation. "It will be impossible to tell," wrote a friend, "how many will look back in after years to the teachings of the Swamis as a turning-point in their lives." In these six years one sees the growing influence of Oriental philosophy in America in the subjects comprised in courses of lectures, in sermons preached in some of the best known churches, in the publication of an increasing number of metaphysical and philosophical magazines, and in the rise of "New Thought" Societies,—all setting forth the principles and practices of the Vedânta, under many names and in various ways. Thus, when the Swami left the shores of India the



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second time for the West, he did it with a satisfying consciousness of an ever-brightening prospect opening up before him. And though his visit was intended to be chiefly in search of health, he was again hurled into the vortex of intense activity, for preaching and teaching was as vital a part of his life as the air he breathed.

Let us also turn our attention to another sphere of activity, which, though humble, is not a less important factor of the movement—the various humanitarian works undertaken by the Brotherhood to alleviate the wants and miseries of suffering humanity in India, starting with Bengal as a nucleus.

Swami Akhandananda fired by the enthusiastic words of the Leader did much educational work in Khetri. Through his activities the number on the role in the local school increased immensely and the staff and quality of teaching also improved. At that time the system of slavery was in vogue in Rajputana. At the earnest endeavours of Swami Akhandananda many slave boys were made free and proper arrangements were made for their education.

But Swami Akhandananda's activities were not confined to the town alone. Going about from village to village he established five Lower Primary Schools. Shortly after, at the advice of Swami Vivekananda, and satisfied with seeing the uniform progress of these schools, the Maharaja of Khetri sanctioned from the revenue of his State, an additional annual grant of rupees five thousand for the education department. The local Sanskrit School was also, by the Swami's effort, converted into a Vedic School for teaching Yajur Veda.

Some time after, in 1895, the Swami went to Nathdwara in Udaipur State for a brief stay, and there also after much labour started a Middle English

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School, and managed to conduct it for a time, thanks to the help of an educated Bengalee youth. Besides these he established in Alwar and other States in Rajputana several associations for the culture of knowledge, in which religion, various branches of learning and many other subjects pertaining to the welfare of the people were discussed.

Allusion has been made elsewhere to the famine relief work conducted by Swami Akhandananda in the District of Murshidabad with his exemplary zeal and self-sacrifice, which drew from the Government authorities praise and cordial co-operation. Moved by the helpless condition of deserted children in the course of his wanderings through affected villages, the Swami conceived the idea of starting an orphanage and began his work with two little orphans in August 1897, at Mohula, the centre of his relief work. At the beginning of 1899, it was removed to Sargachi. The number of boys increased gradually as days passed. Besides feeding, nursing and housing them, he devoted his energy to educating them in various arts of usefulness, manual and intellectual, and training them morally and spiritually, so that they might be helpful to themselves and to others,—in short, to make *men* of them, in the full sense of the word. Within two years of its inception he made, with the limited funds at his disposal, proper arrangements for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic in elementary English and the vernacular. Orphans of any creed and caste were welcome, and they were given full freedom to keep to their respective faiths and religious practices. Swami Akhandananda has ever since pushed on boldly with his self-imposed task, fighting against untold difficulties and hardships, with his health shattered under the strain. Suffice it to say here, that if Swami Vivekananda was the

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moving spirit and inspirer of the ideal of service to fellow-men among the Brotherhood, it was Swami Akhandananda who was the first and foremost to take it up and carry it out into practice.

Another famine relief centre was opened in August 1897 at Dinajpur, where several deaths had occurred from starvation, under the management of Swami Trigunatita, on a plan similar to that at Murshidabad. He extended his help within two months to no less than eighty-four villages. His untiring and disinterested services attracted the attention of the Government, and the privilege accorded to Swami Akhandananda of obtaining rice at a much reduced price was also extended to him. The following extract from the Official Report will show how the Swami's work was appreciated by the Government:

"I cannot close my report without referring to the good work done by Swami Trigunatita, a member of the Ramakrishna Mission. . . . Here the Swami took up his abode in great discomfort, and distributed rice gratis to deserving cases. He made every endeavour to arrive at the truth and as far as he was able, made personal enquiries into the cases. He subsequently gave some relief in Dinajpur town itself. . . . Relief was given irrespective of caste and creed. . . . I would add that the Swami managed the whole work himself without the assistance of myself or anyone else. . . ."

At the end of the work a public meeting was convened on December 3, 1897 by the leading residents of the town to present an address of thanks to Swami Trigunatita. The President thanked the Swami and said among other things:

". . . . I fully realise the Swami's good and disinterested work. He had nothing to bind him to this district. His only object was to do good to mankind. . . . He did not depend on the officials for help, neither did he work in opposition to them. The Swami did everything himself and with his own hands.

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This is the secret of success in Self-Government. Self-Government consists in having work done and not having meetings only. . . . If we had more such men, I must say, we shall have more Self-Government. . . . I am glad to preside at this meeting, because though it is a small beginning, yet it is a beginning of self-help in the right line. If there is the germ, it may grow up in time."

After the President had read the address of thanks, Swami Trigunatita rose and spoke in reply very eloquently for two hours, dealing with the cause and remedy of famine. His lecture was much appreciated.

A third relief centre was opened at Deoghur by Swami Virajananda, about the same time and on the same lines as the others. Besides these, centres of relief were also opened at Dakshineswar and Calcutta. It is a noteworthy fact in connection with the famine relief work, that the friends and disciples of the Swamis in England and America were so much moved with the descriptions of the heart-rending distress that they convened meetings and sent liberal donations.

Mention has been made of the plans devised and arrangements completed by the Swami himself when the epidemic of the bubonic plague first broke out in Calcutta in May 1898, and when the panic-stricken people were fleeing the city. It was a Sannyâsin clad in loin cloth who thought of their welfare then.

When the plague appeared in Calcutta again the next year, the Ramakrishna Mission plague service was promptly instituted on March 31, under the Swami's instructions, and did considerable work in a well-organised way. He himself went to live in the slums to inspire courage in the people and cheer up the workers. The whole management was placed in the hands of Sister Nivedita as Secretary, and Swami Sadananda as the officer-in-chief with

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Swamis Sivananda, Nityananda and Atmananda as assistants. Bustees, or poor quarters, in four of the districts of the city were cleared of cartloads of filth and congested matter and thoroughly disinfected with the help of scavengers under the direct supervision of the Swamis.

A movement of a permanent value among the students was inaugurated by the stirring words of Swami Vivekananda from the chair, on the occasion of Sister Nivedita's address on "The Plague and the Duty of the Students," at the public meeting held in the Classic Theatre on April 21. Fifteen students volunteered for service. They were formed into a band of helpers, for door-to-door inspection of huts in selected Bustees, for the distribution of sanitary literature, and for speaking words of counsel. They used to meet on Sundays at the Ramakrishna Mission, to submit reports of their work to Sister Nivedita, and to receive instructions from her until the epidemic subsided.

Another institution which grew at once into public favour and into huge proportions as a national festival after the return of the Swami to India from the West, was the celebration of the birthday anniversary of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Barring the religious significance and features of the festival, thousands of the poor were fed, not only at the headquarters but in all the branch centres of the Order in the different provinces.

This, in brief, is the record of public service done within two years and a half by the Ramakrishna Mission and the Brotherhood under the inspiration and guiding genius of Swami Vivekananda. The value of this kind of service is not to be gauged so much by the actual amount of work done, great though it was, as by the spirit of service and fellow-

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ship, of co-operation and unity infused into others to thrive and grow with ever-increasing force.

In those days when famine raged with all its horrors, the dominating thought with the Swami was of the poor and miserable victims. The cry of the distressed seemed to transfix his heart. All those who heard him talk during these days on the ways and means of alleviating the sad lot of the masses, felt in their inmost soul his love for his country and his sympathy for his countrymen.

Once Pandit Sakharam Ganes Deuskar, the late-revered editor of the *Hitavâdi*, came to see the Swami with two of his friends. Learning that one of them came from the Punjab, the Swami entered into conversation with him on the needs of that province, especially about the scarcity of food that was then prevailing there, and how that had to be met. The talk drifted on to our duty to the masses in providing them with educational facilities for the betterment of their material and social conditions, and other allied subjects. Before taking leave the Punjabi gentleman expressed his regret courteously, "Sir, with great expectations of hearing various teachings on religion we came to see you. But unfortunately our conversation turned on commonplace matters. The day has passed in vain!" The Swami became at once grave and solemn and said, "Sir, so long as even a dog of my country remains without food, to feed and take care of him is my religion, and anything else is either non-religion or false religion!" All the three visitors were struck dumb by the Swami's reply. Years after the passing of the Swami, Mr. Deuskar in relating the incident to a disciple, told him that those words burnt into his soul making him realise, as never he had done before, what true patriotism was.

It was about the same time also that a Pandit of

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the Upper Provinces came to the Swami to argue with him on the Vedânta philosophy. The Swami was then sorely depressed at his helplessness in coping with the wide-spread famine. Without giving the Pandit any opportunity to discuss the Sâstras, he said, "Panditji, first of all try to ameliorate the terrible distress that is prevailing everywhere, to still the heart-rending cry of your hungry countrymen for a morsel of food; after that come to me to have a debate on the Vedânta. To stake one's whole life and soul to save thousands who are dying of starvation—this is the essence of the religion of the Vedânta!"

"Verily, the austerities and self-tortures of the Hatha Yoga," as a lecturer has said, "pale into insignificance before the higher and nobler way shown to us by the great Swami Vivekananda—this laying down of our lives as a sacrifice on the altar of humanity."

As early as December 16, the Swami had announced his intention of going to the West. And now with the approach of summer he was urged by his friends and physicians to do so at once as his health was in the balance. He himself wrote to an American disciple on April 11: "Two years of physical suffering have taken away twenty years from my life. Well, but the soul changeth not, does it? It is there, the same madcap—Atman—mad upon one idea, intent and intense." The sea voyage, it was thought, would do him good. It was finally decided that he would sail from Prinsep's Ghat, Calcutta, on June 20, and that Swami Turiyananda as also Sister Nivedita who was sailing for England in the interest of her Girls' School, would accompany him.

Swami Turiyananda was held in great love and reverence by the Brotherhood for his austere life

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of Brahmacharya from his very boyhood, for his spirit of burning renunciation and his highly developed spiritual nature. Versed in Sanskrit and an adept in meditation, he had from the days of the Alambazar Math trained the younger members of the monastery, by holding classes and talks and, above all, by his exemplary life. When it was proposed that he would accompany the Swami to America, he expressed the desire of taking with him some standard works on the Vedânta philosophy in Sanskrit, for help and reference. The Swami exclaimed: "Oh, learning and books they have had enough! They have seen the Kshattria power,—now I want to show them the Brâhmana!" He meant that in himself the West had seen the combative spirit and energy in the defence of the Sanâtana Dharma; and now the time had come when the people of the antipodes should have before them the example of a man of meditation in his Gurubhai, born and bred in the best traditions and rigorous disciplines of Brâhmanhood.

Swami Turiyananda as a man of meditation was averse from public life. The Swami had tried hard to persuade him to come into the arena, but in vain. At last one day, in Darjeeling, when all argument had failed, the Swami put his arms round his Gurubhai's neck and laying his head against his breast, wept like a child, saying, "Dear Haribhai, can't you see me laying down my life, inch by inch, in fulfilling this mission of my Master, till I have come to the verge of death! Can you look on without helping by relieving me of a part of my great burden?" The Gurubhai was overpowered. All hesitation vanished. Then and there he pledged himself to do unflinchingly the Swami's bidding. So it was that he took the work in the West as the will of the Mother and resigned himself wholly to the task.



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On the night of the nineteenth, a formal meeting was held at the monastery, at which the junior members presented their Superior with a parting address, as they did also to Swami Turiyananda who gave a brief reply. The Swami's own reply took the form of a short lecture on "Sannyâsa: Its Ideal and Practice," in which he insisted upon the Sannyâsin's love of death, that is to say, holding one's life as a sacrifice to the world, because then all actions would be performed selflessly and with a view to do good to others. Too high and impossible an ideal was wrong. That had been the trouble with the Buddhist and Jain reformers. Too much practicality was also wrong. The two extremes must be avoided. "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields (pointing to the meadows of the Math) You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the Sâstras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market. . . ." They must remember that the aim of the monastery was Man-making. They themselves must be Rishis. "The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart." They must have a deep regard for their Sangha (the Order) and be implicitly obedient. Having given them this final instruction the Swami, gazing lovingly, as a father upon his children, blessed them.

On the day of departure, the Holy Mother gave a sumptuous feast at her Calcutta house to the Swami and Swami Turiyananda and to all her Sannyâsin children of the Math. Receiving her blessings, the two Gurubhais left in the afternoon for Prinsep's Ghat, where they found numerous friends assembled to

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bid them and Sister Nivedita farewell. The Swami was in the best of spirits and bade them all to be of good cheer. Needless to say that there was much sadness and everyone was visibly moved when the time for final greetings came, but the Swami, they knew, was always with them at heart.

## XXXV

### SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA

On June 20, 1899, the Swami boarded the steamer *Golconda* and was off for the West. In the Bay of Bengal the sea was exceedingly rough. On the twenty-fourth the ship touched at Madras. Here a great crowd was waiting, for the news of the Swami's coming had been telegraphed on, but on account of plague in Calcutta, the Indian passengers were not allowed to land. This was a great disappointment to the whole city.

Old friends and disciples of the Swami, as also Swami Ramakrishnananda and others came in boats alongside the steamer, bringing fruits, flowers and other offerings to the Swami, who greeted them from the railing and talked to them until fatigue overcame him. Alasingha Perumal, that devoted worker, was especially anxious to consult the Swami concerning the management of the *Brahmavâdin* magazine, and for this reason he purchased a ticket to Colombo.

At Colombo the Swami received a great ovation. He was glad to see his old friends again, among whom were Sir Coomaraswamy and Mr. Arunachalam. He visited Mrs. Higgin's Boarding School for Buddhist girls, and also the convent and school of his old acquaintance, the Countess Canovara.

The steamer left Colombo on the morning of June 28. It was monsoon time and the ship tossed heavily all the way to Aden, which was reached in ten instead of the usual six days. At Socotra, the monsoon was fiercest, this being its very centre, as the Captain remarked to the Swami. Beyond this point the sea was comparatively calm. The steamer

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reached Aden on July 8, and Suez, through the Red Sea and the Suez canal, on the fourteenth. After touching at Naples, it went on to Marseilles, and the Swami was in London on July 31.

For the Sister and the Swami's Gurubhai, this voyage was a pilgrimage and an education. Sister Nivedita has recorded in her charming style, in *The Master As I Saw Him*, some of the striking conversations of the Swami from her diary, and her impressions. These being of absorbing interest to the readers of the Swami's life, as they show the Master in varying moods, the biographers need make no apology for making the following quotations from them. Writes the Sister:

“From the beginning of the voyage to the end, the flow of thought and story went on. One never knew what moment would see the flash of intuition, and hear the ringing utterance of some fresh truth. It was while we sat chatting in the River on the first afternoon that he suddenly exclaimed, ‘Yes! the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale!’ And these words link themselves in my memory with those of another day, when I had been reminding him of the rareness of criminality in India. And he turned on me, full of sorrowful protest. ‘Would to God it were otherwise in my land!’ he said, ‘for this is verily the virtuousness of death!’ Stories of the Sivarâtri, or Dark Night of Siva, of Prithvi Rai, of the Judgment-seat of Vikramaditya, of Buddha and Yashodhara, and a thousand more were constantly coming up. And a noticeable point was that one never heard the same thing twice. There was the perpetual study of caste; the constant examination and restatement of ideas; the talk of work, past, present, and future; and, above all, the vindication of Humanity, never abandoned, never weakened, always rising to new heights of defence of the undefended, of chivalry for the weak. . . .

“I cannot forget his indignation when he heard some European reference to cannibalism, as if it were a normal part of life in some societies. ‘That is not true!’ he said, when he had heard to the end. ‘No nation ever ate human flesh, save

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as a religious sacrifice, or in war, out of revenge. Don't you see? That is not the way of gregarious animals! It would cut at the roots of social life!' Kropotkin's great work on 'Mutual Aid' had not yet appeared, when these words were said. It was his love of Humanity, and his instinct on behalf of each in his own place, that gave to the Swami so clear an insight.

"Again he talked of religious impulse. 'Sex-love and creation!' he cried, 'These are at the root of most religion. And these in India are called Vaishnavism, and in the West Christianity. How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali! Let us worship Death! Let us embrace the Terrible, because it is terrible; not asking that it be toned down. Let us take misery, for misery's own sake!'

"As we came to the place where the river-water met the ocean, . . . the Swami explained how it was the great reverence of Hindus for the ocean, forbidding them to defile it by crossing it, that had made such journeys equal to outcasting for so many centuries. Then, as the ship crossed the line, touching the sea for the first time, he chanted, 'Namo Sivâya! Namo Sivâya! . . .'

"He was talking again of the fact that he who would be great must suffer, and how some were fated to see every joy of the senses turn to ashes, and he said, 'The whole of life is only a swan-song. . . .'

"Now he would answer a question, with infinite patience, and again he would play with historic and literary speculations. Again and again his mind would return to the Buddhist period, as the *crux* of a real understanding of Indian history.

" 'The three cycles of Buddhism,' he said one day, 'were five hundred years of the Law, five hundred years of images, and five hundred years of Tantras. You must not imagine that there was ever a religion in India called Buddhism, with temples and priests of its own order! Nothing of the sort. It was always within Hinduism. Only at one time the influence of Buddha was paramount, and this made the nation monastic. . . .'

" And he drifted on to talk about the Soma plant, picturing how for a thousand years after the Himalayan period, it was annually received in Indian villages as if it were a king, the people going out to meet it on a given day, and bringing it in rejoicing. And now it cannot even be identified! . . .

" 'Yes, Buddha was right! It *must* be cause and effect in *Karma*. This individuality cannot but be an illusion!'

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It was the next morning, and I had supposed him to be dozing in his chair, when he suddenly exclaimed, 'Why! the memory of one life is like millions of years of confinement, and they want to wake up the memory of many lives! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!'

" 'I have just been talking to Turiyananda about conservative and liberal ideas,' he said as he met me on deck before breakfast one morning, and straightaway plunged into the subject.

" 'The conservative's whole ideal is *submission*. Your ideal is struggle. Consequently it is *we* who enjoy life, and never you! You are always striving to change yours to something better, and before a millionth part of the change is carried out, you die. The Western ideal is, to be doing: the Eastern, to be suffering. The perfect life would be a wonderful harmony between doing and suffering. But that can never be.

" 'In our system it is accepted that a man can never have all he desires. Life is subjected to many restraints. This is ugly, yet it brings out points of light and strength. Our liberals see only the ugliness, and try to throw it off. But they substitute something quite as bad, and the new custom takes as long as the old, for us to work to its centres of strength.

" 'Will is not strengthened by change. It is weakened and enslaved by it. But we must be always absorbing. Will grows stronger by absorption. And consciously or unconsciously, will is the one thing in the world that we admire. Suttee is great in the eyes of the whole world, because of the will that it manifests.

" 'It is selfishness that we must seek to eliminate! I find that whenever I have made a mistake in my life, it has always been because *self* entered into the calculation. Where self has not been involved, my judgment has gone straight to the mark.

" 'Without this self, there would have been no religious system. If man had not wanted anything for himself, do you think he would have had all this praying and worship? Why! he would never have thought of God at all, except perhaps for a little praise now and then, at the sight of a beautiful landscape or something. And that is the only attitude there ought to be. All praise and thanks. If only we were rid of self!'

" 'You are quite wrong,' he said again, 'when you think that fighting is a sign of growth. It is not so at all. Absorption is the sign. Hinduism is the very genius of absorption. We have never cared for fighting. Of course we struck a blow now and then, in defence of our homes! That was right. But

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we never cared for fighting for its own sake. Everyone had to learn that. So let these races of new comers whirl on! They'll all be taken into Hinduism in the end!

"He never thought of his Mother-Church or his Motherland except as dominant; and again and again, when thinking of definite schemes, he would ejaculate, in his whimsical way, 'Yes, it is true! If European men or women are to work in India, it *must* be under the black man!'

"He brooded much over the national achievement. 'Well! Well!' he would say, 'We have done one thing that no other people ever did. We have converted a whole nation to one or two ideas. Non-beef-eating for instance. Not one Hindu eats beef. No, no!'—turning sharply round—'it is not at all like European non-cat-eating; for beef was formerly the food of the country!'

"We were discussing a certain opponent of his own, and I suggested that he was guilty of putting his sect above his country. 'That is Asiatic,' reported the Swami warmly, 'and it is grand! Only he had not the brain to conceive, nor the patience to wait!' and then he went off into a musing on Kali. . . .

" 'I love terror for its own sake,' he went on, 'despair for its own sake, misery for its own sake. Fight always. Fight and fight on, though always in defeat. That's the ideal. That's the ideal.'

" 'The totality of all souls, not the human alone,' he said once, 'is the Personal God. The will of the Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as Law. And this is what we mean by Siva and Kali and so on.'

"It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the Straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. 'Messina must thank *me!*' he said, 'It is I who give her all her beauty!'

"Then he talked of the fever of longing to reach God, that had wakened in him as a boy, and of how he would begin repeating a text before sunrise, and remain all day repeating it, without stirring. He was trying here to explain the idea of Tapasyâ, in answer to my questions, and he spoke of the old way of lighting four fires, and sitting in the midst, hour after hour, with the sun overhead, reining in the mind. 'Worship

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the terrible!' he ended, 'Worship Death! All else is vain. All struggle is vain. That is the last lesson. Yet this is not the coward's love of death, not the love of the weak, or the suicide. It is the welcome of the strong man, who has sounded everything to his depths, and *knows* that there is no alternative.' "

Often during the voyage the Swami talked of those saints whom he had known personally. Paramount was Sri Ramakrishna of whom he told, among many other things, how with but a touch he could impart the highest insight, as instanced in the case of the lad who never spoke the remaining ten years of his life, save to say, "My Beloved! My Beloved!" after being touched by the Master's hand. And he spoke also of a certain woman who on being offered salutation by the Master in the name of the Mother, by throwing flowers on her feet and burning incense before her, passed immediately into the deepest Samâdhi, from which it was most difficult to recall her to sense-consciousness till two or three hours had elapsed. Before she left,

"None had the forethought to make a single enquiry as to her name or abode. She never came again. Thus her memory became like some beautiful legend treasured in the Order as witness to the worship of Sri Ramakrishna for gracious and noble wifehood and motherhood. Had he not said of this woman, 'a fragment of the eternal Madonnahood'? . . . 'Was it a joke,' the Swami said, 'that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa should touch a life? *Of course* he made new men and new women of those who came to him, even in these fleeting contacts!'

"And then he would tell story after story of different disciples. How one came, and came again, and struggled to understand. And suddenly to this one he turned and said, 'Go away now, and make some money! Then come again!' And that man, today was succeeding in the world, but the old love was proving itself ever alight."

The Swami spoke with great feeling of Nag Mahasaya, who had paid him a visit in Calcutta only a few



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weeks before his departure. Nag Mahasaya, he said again and again, was "one of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahansa." He related how on one occasion he had cut down the ridge-pole of his cottage, in order to make the fire to cook food for a guest.

Speaking of the modern saints of Hindusthan, such as Pavhari Baba, Trailanga Swami, Raghunath Das and others, as also of those of ancient times,

"His whole soul went to the interpretation of each, as he rose before him, and it would have been impossible at any moment for the listener to think of any other as higher. . . .

"Raghunath Das had been dead two months, when the Swami reached his Asrama. He had been a soldier originally in the British service, and as an outpost sentinel was faithful and good, and much beloved by his officers. One night, however, he heard a Rama-Rama party. He tried to do his duty, but 'Jaya Bolo Rama Chandra Ki Jaya!' maddened him. He threw away his arms and uniform, and joined the worship.

"This went on for some time, till reports came to the Colonel. He sent for Raghunath Das, and asked him whether these were true, and if he knew the penalty. Yes, he knew it. It was to be shot. 'Well,' said the Colonel, 'go away this time, and I shall repeat it to no one. This once I forgive you. But if the same thing happens again, you must suffer the penalty.'

"That night, however, the sentinel heard again the Rama-Rama party. He did his best, but it was irresistible. At last he threw all to the winds, and joined the worshippers till morning. Meanwhile, however, the Colonel's trust in Raghunath Das had been so great that he found it difficult to believe anything against him, even on his own confession. So in the course of the night, he visited the outpost, to see for himself. Now, Raghunath Das was in his place, and exchanged the word with him three times. Then, being reassured, the Colonel turned in, and went to sleep.

"In the morning appeared Raghunath Das to report himself and surrender his arms. But the report was not accepted, for the Colonel told him what he had himself seen and heard. Thunderstruck, the man insisted by some means on retiring from the service. Rama it was who had done this for His servant. Henceforth, in very truth, he would serve no other.

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“ ‘ He became a Vairâgi,’ said the Swami, ‘ on the banks of the Saraswati. People thought him ignorant, but I knew his power. Daily he would feed thousands. Then would come the grain-seller, after a while, with his bill. ‘ H’m!’ Raghunath Das would say, ‘ A thousand rupees you say? Let me see. It is a month I think since I have received anything. This will come, I fancy, tomorrow.’ And it always came. . . .’

“ And then, perhaps came the story of Sibi Rana. ‘ Ah, Yes!’ exclaimed the teller, as he ended, ‘ these are the stories that are deep in our nation’s heart! Never forget that the Sannyâsin takes two vows, one to realise the truth, and one to help the world, and that the most stringent of stringent requirements is that he should renounce any *thought* of heaven!’ ”

One day the talk drifted to the question of what becomes of those who failed to keep their vows. Quoting the memorable Slokas of the Gita on the point,

“ First he explained how everything, short of the absolute control of mind, word, and deed, was but ‘ the sowing of wild oats.’ Then he told how the religious who failed would sometimes be born again to a throne, ‘ there to sow his wild oats,’ in gratifying the particular desire which had led to his downfall. ‘ A memory of the religious habit,’ he said, ‘ often haunts the throne.’ For one of the signs of greatness was held to be the persistence of a faint memory. Akbar had had this memory. He thought of himself as a Brahmachârin who had failed in his vows. But he would be born again, in more favourable surroundings, and that time he would succeed. And then there came one of those personal glimpses which occurred so seldom with our Master. Carried away by the talk of memory, he lifted the visor for a moment, on his own soul. ‘ And whatever you may think,’ he said, turning to me suddenly, and addressing me by name, ‘ I have such a memory! . . .’

“ His voice sank into silence, and we sat looking out over the star-lit sea. Then he took up the thread again. ‘ As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sidney greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others, even in the moment of death.’

“ ‘ But anyone will be great in a great position! Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the footlights. The

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world looks on. Whose heart will not throb? Whose pulse will not quicken, till he can do his best? More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, doing its duty silently, steadily, from moment to moment, and hour to hour.'

"How many points on the map have received a new beauty in my eyes, from the conversations they recall! As we passed up the coast of Italy, we talked of the Church. As we went through the Straits of Bonifacio, and sat looking at the south coast of Corsica, he spoke in a hushed voice of 'this land of the birth of the War-Lord,' and wandered far afield, to talk of the strength of Robespierre, or to touch on Victor Hugo's contempt for Napoleon III, with his 'Et tu Napoleon?'

"As I came on deck, on the morning of our passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, he met me with the words, 'Have you seen them? Have you seen them? Landing there and crying, *Din! Din!*' 'The Faith! The Faith!' And for half-an-hour I was swept away into his dramatisation of the Moorish invasions of Spain.

"Or again, on a Sunday evening, he would sit and talk of Buddha putting new life into the customary historical recital of bare facts, and interpreting the Great Renunciation as it had appeared to him who made it.

"But his talks were not all entertaining, nor even all educational. Every now and then he would return, with consuming eagerness, to the great purpose of his life. And when he did this, I listened with an anxious mind, striving to treasure up each word that he let fall. For I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dreams.

"One of these occasions came on a certain evening, as we neared Aden. I had asked him, in the morning, to tell me, in broad outline, what he felt to be the points of difference between his own schemes for the good of India, and those preached by others. It was impossible to draw him out on this subject. On the contrary, he expressed appreciation of certain personal characteristics and lines of conduct, adopted by some of the leaders of other schools, and I regarded the question as dismissed. Suddenly, in the evening, he returned to the subject of his own accord.

" 'I disagree with all those,' he said, 'who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is

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purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. *My* hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within.'

" 'So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea—*Strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedānta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was of Non-resistance or Non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now, I will make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness. My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And thou also art He!'

" 'But you may ask—What is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme? He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England, or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life,—and I read the meaning. Never a word of condemnation for any! Once I had been attacking one of our sects of Diabolists. I had been raving on for three hours, and he had listened quietly. 'Well, well!' said the old man as I finished, 'perhaps every house may have a back door. Who knows!'

" 'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—Renunciation and Mukti. Only Mukti here! Nothing for the householders! But these are the very people whom I want to help. For, are not all souls of the same quality? Is not the goal of all the same?

" 'And so strength must come to the nation through education.'

"I thought at the time, and I think increasingly as I consider it, that this one talk of my Master, had been well worth the whole voyage, to have heard. . . .

"The Swami was constantly preoccupied with the thought of Hinduism as a whole, and this fact found recurring expression in references to Vaishnavism. . . .

"He loved to dwell on the spectacle of the historical emergence of Hinduism. He sought constantly for the great force

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*behind* the evolution of any given phenomenon. Where was the thinker behind the founder of a religion? And where, on the other hand, was the heart to complete the thought? Buddha had received his philosophy of the five categories—form, feeling, sensation, motion, knowledge,—from Kapila. But Buddha had brought the love that made the philosophy live. Of no one of these, Kapila had said, can anything be declared. For each is not. It but was, and is gone. Each is but the ripple on the water. Know, O man! thou art the sea'.

“Krishna, in his turn, as the preacher and creative centre of popular Hinduism, awoke in the Swami a feeling which was scarcely second to his passionate, personal adoration of Buddha. Compared to His many-sidedness, the Sannyâsa of Buddha was almost a weakness. How wonderful was the Gita! . . . How strong! But besides this, there was the beauty of it. The Gita, after the Buddhist writings, was such a relief! Buddha had constantly said, ‘I am for the People!’ And they had crushed, in his name, the vanity of art and learning. The great mistake committed by Buddhism lay in the destruction of the old.

“For the Buddhist books were torture to read. Having been written for the ignorant, one would find only one or two thoughts in a huge volume. (The Dhammapada he placed, however, on a level with the Gita). It was to meet the need thus roused, that the Purânas were intended. There had been only one mind in India that had foreseen this need, that of Krishna, probably the greatest man who ever lived. He recognised once the need of the People, and the desirability of preserving all that had already been gained. Nor are the Gopi story and the Gita (which speaks again and again of women and Sudras) the only forms in which he reached the masses. For the whole Mahabharata is his, carried out by his worshippers, and it begins with the declaration that it is for the People.

“Thus is created a religion that ends in the worship of Vishnu, as the preservation and enjoyment of life, leading to the realisation of God. Our last movement, Chaitanyaism, you remember, was for enjoyment. (The Swami was characterising the doctrine here; he was not speaking of the unsurpassed personal asceticism of Chaitanya). At the same time, Jainism represents the other extreme, the slow destruction of the body by self-torture. Hence Buddhism, you see, is reformed Jainism, and this is the real meaning of Buddha's leaving the company

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of the five ascetics. In India, in every age, there is a cycle of sects, which represents every gradation of physical practice, from the extreme of self-torture to the extreme of excess. And during the same period will always be developed a metaphysical cycle, which represents the realisation of God as taking place by every gradation of means, from that of using the senses as an instrument, to that of the annihilation of the senses. Thus Hinduism always consists, as it were, of two counter-spirals, completing each other, round a single axis.

“ ‘Yes! Vaishnavism says: It is all right! This tremendous love for father, for mother, for brother, husband or child! It is all right, if only you will think that Krishna is the child, and when you give him food, that you are feeding Krishna! This was the cry of Chaitanya. ‘Worship God through the senses!’ as against that Vedântic cry, ‘Control the senses! Suppress the senses!’

“ ‘At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion—the Orthodox, the Arya Samâj, and the Brahmo Samâj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samâj corresponds with Jainism, and the Brahmo Samâj with the Buddhists.

“ ‘I see that India is a young and living organism. Europe also is young and living. Neither has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticise its institutions. They are two great experiments, neither of which is yet complete. In India, we have social communism, with the light of Advaita—that is, spiritual individualism—playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism. Thus the one consists of social institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought, while the other is made up of individualist institutions, within the hedge of communistic thought.

“ ‘Now we must help the Indian experiment as it is. Movements which do not attempt to help things as they are, are, from that point of view, no good. In Europe, for instance, I respect marriage as highly as non-marriage. Never forget that a man is made great and perfect as much by his faults as by his virtues. So we must not seek to rob a nation of its character, even if it could be proved that that character was all faults.’

“ ‘His mind was extraordinarily clear on the subject of what he meant by individualism. How often has he said to me, ‘You do not yet understand India! We Indians are *Man-*

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worshippers, after all! Our God is man!' He meant here the great individual man, the man of Self-realisation,—Buddha, Krishna, the Guru, the Mahâpurusha. But on another occasion, using the same word in an entirely different sense, he said, 'This idea of man-worship (that is to say, the worship of the manhood which exists in any man, in all men, apart from their individual achievement of thought or character, humanity) exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been expanded. You must develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Establish the worship of the feet of beggars, as you had it in Mediæval Europe. Make man-worshippers.'

'He was equally clear, again, about the value of the image. 'You may always say,' he said, 'that the image is God. The error you have to avoid, is to think God the image.' He was appealed to, on one occasion, to condemn the fetichism of the Hottentot. 'I do not know,' he answered, 'what fetichism is!' A lurid picture was hastily put before him, of the object alternately worshipped, beaten and thanked. 'I do that!' he exclaimed. 'Don't you see,' he went on, a moment later, in hot resentment of injustice done to the lowly and absent, 'Don't you see that there is no fetichism? Oh, your hearts are steeled, that you cannot see that the child is right! The child sees persons everywhere. Knowledge robs us of the child's vision. But at last, through higher knowledge, we win back to it. He connects a living power with rocks, sticks, trees, and the rest. And is there not a living Power behind them? It is *symbolism*, not fetichism! Can you not see?'

'But while every sincere ejaculation was thus sacred to him, he never forgot for a moment the importance of the philosophy of Hinduism. And he would throw perpetual flashes of poetry into the illustration of such arguments as are known to lawyers. How lovingly he would dwell upon the Mimânsaka philosophy! With what pride he would remind the listener that, according to Hindu *Savants*, 'the whole universe is only *the meaning of words*. After the word comes the thing. Therefore, the idea is all!' And indeed, as he expounded it, the daring of the Mimânsaka argument, the fearlessness of its admissions, and the firmness of its inferences, appeared as the very glory of Hinduism. . . . One day he told the story of Satyabhâmâ sacrifice and how the word 'Krishna,' written on a piece of paper, and thrown into the balances, made Krishna himself, on the other side, kick the beam. 'Orthodox Hinduism,' he began, 'makes Sruti, the sound, everything. The *thing* is but a feeble manifestation of the pre-existing and

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eternal Idea. So the *name* of God is everything: God Himself is merely the objectification of that idea in the eternal mind. Your own name is infinitely more perfect than the person, you! The name of God is greater than God. Guard you your speech!' Surely there has never been another religious system so fearless of truth! As he talked, one saw that the whole turned on the unspoken conviction, self-apparent to the Oriental mind, that religion is not a creed, but an experience; a process, as the Swami himself has elsewhere said, of being and becoming. If it be true that this process leads inevitably from the apprehension of the manifold to the realisation of the One, then it must also be true that everything is in the mind, and that the material is nothing more than the concretising of ideas. Thus the Greek philosophy of Plato is included within the Hindu philosophy of the Mimāṃsakas, and a doctrine that sounds merely empiric on the lips of Europe finds reason and necessity, on those of India. In the same way, as one declaring a truth self-evident, he exclaimed, on one occasion, 'I would not worship even the Greek gods, for they were separate from humanity! Only those should be worshipped who are like ourselves, but greater. The difference between the gods and me must be a difference only of degree.'

"But his references to philosophy did not by any means always consist of these epicurean tit-bits. He was merciless, as a rule, in the demand for intellectual effort, and would hold a group of unlearned listeners through an analysis of early systems, for a couple of hours at a stretch, without suspecting them of weariness or difficulty. . . .

"Nor would Western speculations pass forgotten in this great restoration of the path the race had come by. For his was a mind which saw only the seeking, pursuing enquiry of man, making no arbitrary distinction as between ancient and modern. . . ."

In this way he would run over all the six systems of Hindu philosophy, analysing, comparing, reconciling one with the other, and showing their points of difference from Buddhism. Thus he dwelt long and minutely on the Vaiseshika and the Nyāya philosophy in particular, side by side with that of the Vedānta, and of Kant. He concluded by saying:

"One set of persons, you see, gives priority to the external



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manifestation, the other to the internal ideal. Which is prior, the bird to the egg, or the egg to the bird! Does the oil hold the cup, or the cup the oil? This is a problem of which there is no solution. Give it up! Escape from Mâyâ!”

But the Swami was not occupied all the time with problems; free from the cares of public life, he was often jovial, and gave himself up to fun and merriment with his Gurubhai and his disciple. He enjoyed the long sea-voyage and fulfilled his promise to the editor of the *Udbodhan*, by writing Bengali articles for the paper. These were for the greater part penned in the most delightful and humorous style, interspersed here and there with serious and instructive thoughts, both secular and spiritual. These contributions were later collected and made into a book called, *Parivrâjaka* or “the Itinerant Monk.” This is, indeed, from one point of view, a singular production, being in its nature untranslatable keeping to its native spirit, and shows that he could have been the Mark Twain of the Bengali literature if he had so wished.

Thus passed the time, until on July 31, the party arrived in London, to be met on landing at the Tilbury Dock by many friends and disciples of the Swami. Among them were, much to his surprise, two American ladies who had come all the way from Detroit to meet him in London, having seen in an Indian magazine that he would sail from India on June 20, and especially because they were alarmed at the reports they had heard regarding his health. One of these, Mrs. Funke, describing his appearance, says: “He had grown very slim and looked and acted like a boy. He was so happy to find that the voyage had brought back some of the old strength and vigour.”

It being the off-season period in London, the

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Swami remained but two weeks in Wimbledon, a suburb of the metropolis, where quarters were found in a roomy old-fashioned house. It was very quiet and restful, and all spent a happy time there. With the exception of several conversations, the Swami did no public work in London at this time. On August 16, in response to the many invitations which constantly reached him from America, he left London, accompanied by Swami Turiyananda and his American disciples. Of the voyage across the Atlantic Mrs. Funke writes:

“ . . . These were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean. Reading and exposition of the Gita occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight, stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. ‘And if all this Mâyâ is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the Reality behind it!’ he would exclaim.

“One especially fine evening when the moon was at the full and softly mellow and golden, a night of mystery and enchantment, he stood silently for a long time drinking in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly he turned to us and said: ‘Why recite poetry when there,’ pointing to sea and sky, ‘is the very essence of poetry?’

“We reached New York all too soon, feeling that we never could be grateful enough for those blessed, intimate ten days with the Guru. . . .”

The very afternoon of his arrival in New York from Glasgow, after visiting the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami with his Gurubhai accompanied them to their beautiful country-home called Ridgely Manor, on the Hudson, in the Catskill mountains, about one hundred and fifty miles from New York. He waited there “for the leading that he confidently expected, to show him where his next effort was to lie.” A month later he was joined there

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by Sister Nivedita. The hosts with their family were devoted to the Swami, who was much better, and had put himself under the treatment of a famous osteopath. He remained in this country-retreat until November 5; his presence was a constant delight to his hosts, and his mind reverted to many interesting experiences of his former stay in America.

Swami Abhedananda who had been away from New York on a lecturing tour at the time of the Swami's arrival, was soon wired to by him to come and meet him at his retreat, in order to report concerning the New York work. He stayed about ten days, and it was with great satisfaction that the Swami learned that the Vedânta Society was now in permanent quarters. On October 15, the "Vedânta Society Rooms" were formally opened by Swami Abhedananda, who held regular classes there from the twenty-second. An American Brahmachârini writes concerning the Swami at the time:

"It is already three weeks since Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda reached America from England. Swami Vivekananda is rapidly recovering from all indisposition, and for the gain made in health during the voyage from India to England, is daily adding renewed vigour. The few chosen ones who have heard the Swami in easy home-talks since his arrival, are deeply impressed with the great message of truth he bears, —a larger and fuller prophecy and vision than any he has yet given to the East or West. Swami Turiyananda is beloved by all who meet him and is heartily welcomed as a needed teacher. Happy and blessed are we by their presence. . . . Swami Vivekananda is resting quietly in the home of loving friends, where Swami Turiyananda also is, together with Swami Abhedananda. Swami Turiyananda has endeared himself to all who have met him, and his work is opening out to him in a hearty welcome from students of Vedânta, eager for his teaching. . . ."

And soon work did open out for the newly-arrived Swami Turiyananda. He is seen a few weeks later in Mont Clair, a short distance from New York,

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teaching the children, by means of stories and with readings from the *Hitopadesa* and other books of Indian wisdom. He also lectured regularly at the Vedânta Society Rooms, co-operating in the work of Swami Abhedananda. Later on, in December, he went to Cambridge, Mass., and did much valuable work there. On December 10, he read a paper on "Sankarâchârya," before the Cambridge Conference. The Professors of the Harvard University and many other learned men spoke in high terms of it.

The first appearance of Swami Vivekananda was at a meeting of the New York Society at which he presided on Tuesday, November 8, to a question-and-answer class. On the tenth he was given a public reception, in the library of the Vedânta Society, to which many of his New York friends of former days came to meet their beloved teacher again. There was also present a large number who had been attracted by his name or his books and wished to meet him personally. An address of welcome was presented to him by some of his old friends, in replying to which the Swami made it plain that his heart was overflowing with love and good-will to them.

Even in the midst of his multifarious activities, the Swami would, now and then, get a glimpse of a strange foreboding regarding his life on this mortal plane. One day he said to Swami Abhedananda, "Well, brother, my days are numbered. I shall live only for three or four years at the most." The Gurubhai replied, "You must not talk like that, Swamiji. You are fast recovering your health. If you stay here for some time, you will be completely restored to your former strength and vigour. Besides, we have got so much work to do. It has only begun." But the Swami replied significantly, "You do not understand me, brother. I feel

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that I am growing very big. My self is expanding so much that at times I feel as if this body could not contain me any more. I am about to burst. Surely, this cage of flesh and blood cannot hold me for many days more."

After a fortnight's stay in New York, during which he paid visits to a few neighbouring towns, the Swami left on November 22, for California. At the earnest solicitation of his devoted friends and admirers in Chicago he stopped over there, attending several receptions which were given in his honour. He met again many people who had known him in the days of the Parliament of Religions. It was a great delight to him to find how many, who had not even seen him, had been attracted to his teaching and had not only gained understanding by reading his books, but had also developed a great reverence for India and Indian things. Here, also, he visited several outlying suburbs where he was entertained at dinner or at receptions by various distinguished persons. The Swami reached California in the first days of December and did not return to New York until June 7 of the following year.

The Swami's immediate destination was Los Angeles where he was the guest of Mrs. Blodgett. Miss MacLeod and her brother were also at the time the guests of the same lady, who moved in quiet and distinguished intellectual circles. He remained in Los Angeles till the middle of February. Shortly after his arrival there, he found himself again surrounded by many persons eager to see the Teacher with whose religious writings they were familiar. Invitations pressed in upon him. He was compelled to give a series of lectures, the first of which was delivered on December 8, in Blanchard Hall, the subject being the "Vedânta Philosophy." The next lecture,

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"The Cosmos," was given at Amity Church under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of Southern California. Several other lectures were delivered in public halls in Los Angeles, and among them were, "Work and Its Secret" (January 4, 1900), "Powers of the Mind" (January 8), and "The Open Secret." He also spoke in the adjacent town of Pasadena, in the Universalist Church and in the Shakespeare Club. The lectures, "Christ The Messenger" and "The Way to the Realization of a Universal Religion" delivered to huge audiences were the most popular. He gave several noteworthy addresses on "The Epics of Ancient India," before the Shakespeare Club. Among others, the subjects of this series were "The Râmâyana," "The Mâhâbhârata," "The Story of Jada Bharata," and "The Story of Prahlâd." On February 3, he also gave before the same club his lecture on "The Great Teachers of the World." In fact, between Los Angeles and Pasadena, a distance of ten miles, he had to deliver, at the earnest request of the public, one lecture every day during his stay there. It seemed as if much of the old spirit of work had come back to the Swami. The climate, happily, proved to be most salutary for him and he worked at his best.

At the special request of an association known as the "Home of Truth," he spent nearly a month at its headquarters in Los Angeles, and held many classes there, and gave several public lectures at which, every time, more than a thousand people attended. He spoke much, in these days, of "Applied Psychology" and found that Californians were particularly ready for the "Râja Yoga" path of the spiritual life. Many of the members of the Home of Truth became the Swami's ardent followers. His simple

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manners, his great intellectuality, and above all, his towering spirituality completely won them over. According to a rule of their organisation tobacco was tabooed. In the Swami's case this rule was abrogated, because their love for him was beyond measure. The sect was much akin to Christian Science, and was therefore exceedingly interested in his remarks concerning the overcoming of body-bondage and ailments through mental and spiritual processes.

At Los Angeles he was for a time the guest of Miss Spencer, who became one of his fervent disciples. While there, he was wont to sit on the floor beside her aged mother who was blind and nearing the end. At Miss Spencer's question, why he seemed so interested in her mother, he told her that death like birth was a mystery, and so the mother was an interesting study to him. When the body approaches dissolution, the sense-activities are stilled as the soul gradually passes to the life beyond. This state, so sad and repulsive to a mind limited to external appearances, was to the Swami's spiritual insight, pregnant with interest and significance!

The magazine, *Unity*, describing his work in Los Angeles, speaks as follows:

"... Hindu missionaries are not among us to convert us to a better religion than what Christ gave us, but rather in the name of religion itself, to show us that there is in reality but one Religion, and that we can do no better than to put into practice what we profess to believe. We had eight lectures at the Home by the Swami Vivekananda, and all were intensely interesting. . . . There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda the learning of a university-president, the dignity of an archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free and natural child. Getting upon the platform without a moment's preparation, he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing conditions in Christian

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countries of today, whose people go and seek to reform the Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, or in South Africa allow children of the same Father to cut each other to pieces. In contrast to this condition of things, he described what took place during the last great famine in India where men would die of starvation beside their cattle (cows) rather than stretch forth a hand to kill. . . .”

When the Swami left Los Angeles it was to become the guest of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Fay Mills of Oakland, at whose church, the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, he gave eight lectures to crowded audiences numbering often as many as two thousand persons; and the mornings following, he would find his name blazoned in all the leading newspapers of the State. These lectures were given on the occasion of a local Congress of Religions that was being held at the time in the Rev. B. F. Mills’ church, and thus hundreds of prominent Californian clergymen had the opportunity to meet the Swami, to exchange ideas, and in many instances, to be converted to his spiritual outlook. In a lecture before the gathering, the Rev. Dr. Mills speaking on “The Hindu Way of Salvation,” introduced the Swami in terms of highest praise, describing him as, “a man of gigantic intellect, indeed, one to whom our greatest university professors were as mere children.”

The impression which the Swami made was tremendous. A great stir was created in the leading intellectual circles of the State. In the latter part of February, at the request of numerous distinguished residents of the adjoining city of San Francisco, the metropolis of the State of California, the Swami went there and worked strenuously till the month of May. His first lecture was on “The Ideal of a Universal Religion,” delivered at the Golden Gate Hall, where he received a tremendous ovation. He was induced to take spacious quarters in Turk Street so that he might



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open private classes for the benefit of numerous interested persons. Here he commenced regular training classes in Râja Yoga and meditation, and gave also semi-public lectures on the Gita and the Vedânta philosophy in general. He had come to this State, practically unknown except to a considerable number of newspaper readers who recalled the reports of his lectures at the time of the Parliament of Religions. Of course, in ecclesiastical circles all over the United States his name was widely known.

Every Sunday during the months of March and April, the Swami spoke publicly in San Francisco, at Red Men's Hall, Golden Gate Hall, and at Union Square Hall. Three evening lectures a week were also given at Washington Hall, and later at the Social Hall he gave a short series of lectures on Bhakti Yoga. Besides these, on alternate evenings he lectured at Alameda and Oakland. The subjects of some of his Sunday public lectures given in San Francisco were, "Buddha's Message to the World," "The Religion of Arabia and Mahomet the Prophet," "Is the Vedânta Philosophy the Future Religion?" "Christ's Message to the World," "Mahomet's Message to the World," "Krishna's Message to the World," "The Mind and Its Powers and Possibilities," "Mind Culture," "Concentration of the Mind," "Nature and Man," "Soul and God," "The Goal," "Science of Breathing," "Meditation," "The Practice of Religion, Breathing and Meditation," "The Worshipped and Worshipper," and "Formal Worship." "Art and Science in India" was the topic on which he addressed the audience at Wendte Hall, in San Francisco.

At Tucker Hall in Alameda he gave three lectures on the evenings of April 13, 16 and 18, on "Râja Yoga," "Concentration and Breathing," and "The Practice of Religion."

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This list, though a partial one, of lectures delivered by the Swami on the Pacific coast of America up to the end of April, shows that most of them touched on Râja Yoga. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few, all are lost, because they were not taken down.

Once, whilst in some town on the banks of a river in America, he chanced to meet with a party of young men who were shooting vainly from a bridge at eggshells, which were moving with the current of a small stream. These shells were loosely strung together with strings, at one end of which were tied small bits of wood inserted crosswise into the shells, and at the other, a tiny stone, which served as a sort of anchor. The Swami watched them, smiling at their failure, when one of the party noticed this and challenged him to try his hand at the game, assuring him that it was not so easy as it looked. Then the Swami took a gun and successively hit about a dozen shells! They were all astonished and thought that he must evidently be a practised hand. But he assured them to the contrary, saying that he had never handled a gun before, and that the secret of his success lay in the concentration of the mind.

The Swami found his California work prospering beyond measure. In Los Angeles and Pasadena, Vedânta meetings were being held by his students regularly, and the Swami received many letters begging him to return there, but this was at present impossible as his work in the northern part of the State absorbed all his attention. He, however, promised his disciples that he would send some other Sannyâsin teacher to take up his work, when feasible. In the North, several Vedânta centres were formed in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. Among his more intimate disciples in California were Mrs. Hansborough

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of Los Angeles, and Dr. M. H. Logan, and Messrs. C. F. Patterson and A. S. Wollberg, respectively the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the newly-formed Vedânta Society in San Francisco. • The San Francisco Vedânta students were eager to have a Swami and a permanent Vedânta centre. So, like the Los Angeles disciples, they begged the Swami to send them another teacher when he should depart; and this he promised to do. In fact, he wrote to Swami Turiyananda to come at once, but this was not practicable, as he was then conducting the classes in New York in the place of Swami Abhedananda, who was away on a lecture tour. The Swami stayed in San Francisco and its vicinity until the end of May.

Before he left California the Swami received the munificent gift of a large tract of land, 160 acres in extent, as a place of retreat for students of the Vedânta, through the generosity of Miss Minnie C. Boock, one of his devoted students. Though the Swami himself did not visit this place, he was much pleased with the accounts he heard of it. It was very suitably adapted for the purpose, being fifty miles from a railway station and twelve miles from the nearest habitation, except the post-office, three miles distant. It was virgin soil, surrounded by forests and hills, being situated on the uplands in the southern part of the valley of the San Antone on the eastern slope of Mount Hamilton in Santa Clara County of California at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. It was twelve miles from the famous Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton. Being thus removed far from the conflicting influences of worldly life, the name *Sânti Asrama* or "Peace Retreat" was appropriately given to it. On August 2, Swami Turiyananda went there for the first time with twelve students whom he trained regularly in meditation, living with

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them the austere monastic life as in India. These annual retirements of one month in' the year have been continued by the Swami in charge of the San Francisco centre.

Late in the spring of 1900, in the company of friends the Swami retired to Camp Taylor, in the country, for a short vacation. The end of the lecture course found him much exhausted. His health necessitated rest and change; and when he returned to San Francisco after three weeks, it was thought advisable that he should stop at the residence of his disciple, Dr. Logan, in Oak Street, there to be under constant medical supervision, if necessary. Dr. William Forster also attended him. He was prevented from public lecturing for the moment, but gave a series of four talks on the Gita in the parlours at 6, Geary Street and at the private hall at 770 Oak Street on May 24, 26, 28 and 29.

There were many occasions, here in California, when the Swami gave himself over to recreation and communion with his disciples. At the retreat at Camp Taylor he took long walks in the open country and felt himself much improved thereby. And he would often join picnic parties arranged by his disciples in the hills that lie between Pasadena and Los Angeles, or even beyond Pasadena, in the forest defiles and mountain valleys. There were three ladies, well-connected in Los Angeles society and sisters of the well-known banker, Mr. Mead, whom the Swami reckoned as his disciples. One of these, Mrs. Hansborough, would go to any length to be of service to the Swami. They it was who attended to his needs while in that city. He frequently told these three sisters stories of his Indian experience and initiated them, in an especial sense, into Indian ideals, and they in their turn helped in propagating the Vedânta teaching.

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But though he was generally full of mirth and childlike sweetness and freedom, there was always the undertone of serious states of mind. Throughout his Western experience one notices the longing for the Absolute, in letters, from the platform, or in private conversation. And at Alameda, probably when his work had weighed heaviest on him physically, and his mind was tired from the strain, one finds him writing a letter to Miss MacLeod, in which is a very passion of longing to break all bonds and fly unto the Highest. One finds in this letter the old monastic instinct in him cropping forth; the desire for the Supreme Isolation, the yearning for that ecstasy which he had so often known in Dakshineswar in days long past. This letter, dated April 18, 1900, reads:

“ . . . Work is always difficult. Pray, for me, that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her work, She knows. . . .

“I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things and am waiting for the Great Deliverer.

“Siva, O Siva, carry my boat to the other shore!

“After all, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions.

“Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling! ‘I come, Lord, I come.’ ‘Let the dead bury the dead; follow thou Me!’ ‘I come, my beloved Lord, I come!’

“Yes, I come! Nirvâna is before me! I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

“I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound; I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me,

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or I enter into Freedom in the body,—the old man is gone, gone forever, never to come back again!

“The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away;—the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

““You understand why I don’t want to meddle with. . . .; who am I to meddle with any one? I have long given up my place as the leader. I have no right to raise my voice. Since the beginning of this year, I have not dictated anything in India. You know that. . . . The sweetest moments of my life have been when I was drifting. I am drifting again,—with the bright, warm sun ahead, and masses of vegetation around,—and in the heat everything is so still, so calm,—and I am drifting, languidly, in the warm heart of the river! I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet, for fear of breaking the wonderful stillness,—stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion!

“Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come, in Thy warm bosom,—floating where-soever Thou takest me,—in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor!

“Oh, it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows,—without fear, without love, without emotion,—peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures! I come, Lord, I come.

“The world *is*, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations, without exciting any emotion! Oh, the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful, for things are all losing their relative proportions to me,—my body among the first. Om That Existence!”

The Swami, it may be said, had worked in California to excess. In all, his public lectures both in the north and in the south of the State numbered no less than one hundred. Besides these, he was always busy giving private interviews and intimate teaching to numerous ardent souls. No wonder then that he was exhausted. But in a letter written at the time he

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said that his mind was never clearer than in these days. The lectures which created the widest attention and which were reported in long hand were, as has been said, first of all, "Christ The Messenger," then "Work and Its Secret," "The Powers of the Mind," "Hints on Practical Spirituality," "The Open Secret," "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion," and "The Great Teachers of the World,"—all of which were delivered either at Los Angeles or at Pasadena.

Towards the latter part of his stay in California, the Swami received a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, then in London, to join them in Paris in July for the sake of his health. He was also invited by the Foreign Delegates' Committee of the Congress of the History of Religions that was to be held in conjunction with the Paris Exposition of 1900, to lecture before that distinguished assembly. As he thought it best to spend several weeks in New York before sailing, he bade his disciples in San Francisco, Alameda and Oakland farewell, at the end of May, promising them to send in the near future Swami Turiyananda as the head of the Vedânta movement in California.

The journey across the continent proved most fatiguing. He made short stops *en route* at Chicago and Detroit to visit his old friends there. When he arrived in New York, he took up his residence at the Vedânta Society headquarters, and received many of his former disciples and admirers, persons who desired to meet him, after reading his books. He gave only a few public lectures, as his time was chiefly given over to teaching and conversation with his old friends and disciples. He was much pleased at the progress of the Vedânta Society. Because of the pressure of other business, Mr. Leggett had resigned

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the presidentship in favour of Dr. Herschell C. Parker of Columbia College, who was unanimously elected to replace him. Among the honorary members of the Society at this time were the Rev. Dr. R. Heber Newton and Charles R. Lanman, Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University. The Swami lectured on four successive Sundays and held Gita classes on four Saturday mornings during his stay in New York. He spoke to Swami Turiyananda, who had been lecturing at the Society rooms since April, and holding Children's Classes in Vedânta, of his intention of sending him to California at once. At first the Swami found it extremely hard to persuade Swami Turiyananda to take charge of the Sânti Asrama. The brother disciple always hesitated to plunge headlong into any work—and tried to avoid all responsibilities. Devoted to meditation and austerity, he was averse to activity. Failing to persuade Swami Turiyananda by arguments to take charge of the Sânti Asrama, the Swami said at last, "It is the will of the Mother that you should take charge of the work there." At this the brother disciple said jocosely, "Rather say, it is your will. Certainly you have not heard the Mother to communicate Her will to you in that way. How can we hear the words of the Mother!" "Yes, brother," said the Swami with great emotion, "yes, the words of the Mother can be heard as clearly as we hear one another. It only requires a fine nerve to hear the words of the Mother." The Swami expressed this with such fervour that Swami Turiyananda could not but accept the Swami's words as expressing the will of the Divine Mother and he cheerfully agreed to take charge of the Sânti Asrama.

In the report of the Assistant Secretary of the Vedânta Society for June, one reads:



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On June 7, Swami Vivekananda came to New York from California and stayed in the Vedânta Society Rooms, 102 E. 58th St., with Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda. At that time Sister Nivedita was also in the City and she was present at most of the meetings.

"On the following Saturday, June 9, Swami Vivekananda conducted the morning class on the Bhagavad-Gita, relieving Swami Turiyananda, who usually taught the class. On Sunday morning, June 10, Swami Vivekananda lectured in the Vedânta Society Rooms on the subject of 'Vedânta Philosophy.' The rooms were filled to their utmost capacity with students and old friends of the Swami. A reception was given to him on the following Friday evening, thus giving an opportunity to old friends to meet him once more, and many students who had long wished to meet the renowned author of Râja Yoga, were made happy by a few kind words and a grasp of the Master's hand. He spoke on the object of the Vedânta Society, and of the work in America.

"The next morning, Saturday, June 17, he also took charge of the class and lectured on 'What is Religion?' Sister Nivedita spoke in the evening on 'The Ideals of Hindu Women,' giving a most beautiful and sympathetic account of their simple life and purity of thought. The women students, who were always eager to hear of the every-day life and thought of their Hindu sisters, especially enjoyed this talk. The Sister Nivedita was pleased at this interest and answered many questions giving a clearer idea of life in India to most than they had ever known.

"On June 23, Swami Vivekananda conducted the Gita class, and on Sunday, June 24, he lectured on 'The Mother-worship.' In the evening Sister Nivedita spoke again on 'The Ancient Arts of India.' Her talk was most entertaining because of her familiarity with the subject. Her visit and conversation were very instructive. . . .

"Swami Vivekananda conducted the class on the morning of June 30, and the next morning, Sunday, July 1, lectured on the 'Source of Religion.' As on all previous occasions, the rooms were crowded, and all felt it a privilege to listen to him. On July 3, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda left New York, the former going to Detroit to visit old friends, and the latter to California, to establish a *Sânti Asrama* and to take charge of the Vedânta Society work at San Francisco. . . .

"On July 10, Swami Vivekananda returned from Detroit

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and stayed at the Society rooms here until the latter part of July. On the 20th he sailed for Paris. . . .”

Memorable were the parting words of the Swami to Swami Turiyananda when the latter asked for some advice as how to conduct the work which he was being sent to take up. “Go and establish the Asrama in California,” exclaimed the Swami in reply. “Hoist the flag of Vedânta there. From this moment destroy even the very memory of India! Above all, live the *life* and Mother will see to the rest!”

Among the celebrities who were in sympathy with the Swami’s work and with the Vedânta philosophy and Indian culture at large, were Professor Seth Low, the President of the Columbia University, Prof. A. V. W. Jackson of Columbia College, Professor Thomas R. Price and E. Engelsmann of the College of the City of New York, and Professors Richard Botthiel, N. M. Butler, N. A. McLouth, E. G. Sihler, Calvin Thomas and A. Cohn of the New York University.

Among the disciples whom the Swami frequently visited in New York and with whom he spent many hours in discussing philosophy and plans of work was Miss Waldo. Another intimate friend of the Swami, and one who had introduced him into very distinguished circles, both in Chicago in the days of the Parliament of Religions, and in New York, was Mrs. Annie Smith, whom he was wont to call “Mother Smith.” She was born in India, and from early womanhood had interested herself in Indian philosophy. She was well known in America as a lecturer on Oriental subjects. Mrs. Smith, some time after the Swami’s passing away, spent four years in Los Angeles and in Pasadena, and wrote that she “found the spiritual seed of the Swami’s planting springing up all over the Pacific

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coast, for he vitalised American religions and sects, as well as Hinduism."

His stay of seven days in Detroit at the house of Mrs. Greenstidel was devoted to resting; only once or twice did he hold conversaziones for the benefit of his immediate disciples and intimate friends. The last ten days that the Swami spent in rest and retirement in New York in the circle of his followers, were enjoyed not only by the latter but also by himself, though the stay was all too short. One of them writing of the Swami at this time, says:

"He has broadened in his sympathies and expanded in his knowledge during the four years of his absence from America. While the season is now over for lectures and classes, Swamiji's old friends are basking in the sunshine of his presence. His health is now excellent and he is his dear old self once more, with yet a mingling of a newer, nobler self that makes us adore him more than ever. . . . He has to be a world-worker, and so no rest can be for him until that work is done."

Before taking final leave of Swami Vivekananda from the American work it would be interesting to go through the following reminiscences recorded by an intimate disciple of the Swami, which give an impression of his influence in California through lectures and classes:

"It is now more than ten years since the Swami Vivekananda lectured to California audience; it seems but yesterday. It was here as elsewhere; the audiences were his from the outset and remained his to the end. They were swept along on the current of his thought without resistance. Many there were who did not want to resist: whose pleasure and novelty it was to have light thrown into the hidden recesses of their minds by the proximity of a luminous personality. There were a few who would have resisted if they could but whose powers of resistance were neutralised by the irresistible logic, acumen and childlike simplicity of the Great Teacher. Indeed, there were a few who arose to demur but who resumed their seats either in smiling acquiescence or in bewildered impotency.

"The Swami's personality impressed itself on the mind

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with visual intensity. The speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expression and gesticulation; the 'wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency; the translations following in smiling confidence,—all these set off by the spectacular apparel of the Hindu Sannyâsin,—who can forget them?

“As a lecturer he was unique: never referring to notes, as most lecturers do; and though he repeated many discourses on request they were never mere repetitions. He seemed to be giving something of himself, to be speaking from a super-experience. The most abstruse points of the Vedânta were retrieved from the domain of mere speculation by a vital something which seemed to emanate from him. His utterances were dynamic and constructive: arousing thought and directing it into synthetic process. Thus he was not only a lecturer but a Teacher of the highest order as well.

“He encouraged the asking of questions at the conclusion of every lecture and would go to any length to make his questioners understand. On one occasion after persistent queries by a number of persons, it occurred to some one that they were plying the Swami too insistently with questions, and he remarked to that effect. ‘Ask all the questions you like—the more the better,’ was the Swami’s good-natured reply. ‘That is what I am here for, and I won’t leave you till you understand.’ The applause was so prolonged that he was obliged to wait till it subsided before he could continue. At times he literally startled people into belief by his answers. To the question, after a lecture on Reincarnation, ‘Swami, do you remember your past life?’ he answered quickly and seriously, ‘Yes, clearly, even when I was a little boy.’

“Quick and, when necessary, sharp at repartee, he met all opposition with the utmost good nature and even enjoyment. His business was to make his hearers understand and he succeeded as, perhaps, no other lecturer on abstruse subjects ever did. To popularise abstractions, to place them within the mental grasp of even very ordinary Intellects was his achievement. He reached them all. ‘In India,’ he said, ‘they tell me that I ought not to teach Advaita Vedânta to the people at large. But I say that I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths.’

“Once at the conclusion of a lecture he thus announced his next lecture: ‘Tomorrow night I shall lecture on *The Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities*. Come to hear me. I have some-

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thing to say to you. I shall do a little bomb-throwing.' Here he glanced smilingly over the audience, and then with a wave of his hand added, 'Come on! It will do you good.' The next night there was barely standing-room. He kept his word. Bombs were thrown, and he, of all people, knew how to throw them with telling effect. In this lecture he devoted considerable time to the subject of chastity as a means of strengthening the mind. As a practice to develop purity, he expounded the theory of looking upon every woman as one's mother. When he had presented the idea, he paused and, as though in response to inarticulate questionings from the audience, said, 'O yes, this is a theory. I stand up here to tell you about this beautiful theory; but when I think of my own mother I know that to me she is different to any other woman. There is a difference. We cannot deny it. But we see this difference because we think of ourselves as bodies. This theory is to be fully realised in meditation. These truths are first to be heard, then to be meditated upon.'

"He held purity to be for the householder as well as for the monk, and laid great stress on that point. 'The other day a young Hindu came to see me,' he said. 'He has been living in this country for about two years, and suffering from ill-health for some time. In the course of our talk, he said that the theory of chastity must be all wrong, because the doctors in this country had advised him against it. They told him that it was against the law of nature. I told him to go back to India, where he belonged, and to listen to the teachings of his ancestors, who had practised chastity for thousands of years.' Then turning a face puckered into an expression of unutterable disgust, he thundered, 'You doctors in this country who hold that chastity is against the law of nature, don't know what you are talking about. You don't know the meaning of the word purity. You are beasts! beasts! I say, with the morals of a tomcat, if that is the best you have to say on that subject!' Here he glanced defiantly over the audience, challenging opposition by his very glance. No voice was raised, though there were several physicians present.

"Bombs were thrown in all of his lectures. Audiences were jolted out of hereditary ruts, and New Thought students, so-called, were subjected to scathing though constructive criticisms without mercy. Smilingly, he would announce the most stupendous Vedântic conceptions so opposed to Christian theologic dogma; then pause an instant,—how many, many times, and with such winsome effect!—with his teeth pressed over his

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lower lip, as though with bated breath, observing the result. Imagine, if you can, greater violence done to the traditional teachings of Christendom than by his fiery injunction, 'Don't repent! Don't repent!—Spit, if you must, but go on! Don't hold yourselves down by repenting! Throw off the load of sin, if there is such a thing, by knowing your true selves,—The Pure! The Ever Free! . . . That man alone is blasphemous who tells you that you are sinners. . . .' And again, 'This world is a superstition. We are hypnotised into believing it real. The process of salvation is the process of de-hypnotisation. . . . This universe is just the play of the Lord—that is all. It is all just for fun. There can be no reason for His doing anything. Know the Lord if you would understand His play. Be His playfellow and He will tell you all. . . . And to you, who are philosophers, I say that to ask for a reason for the existence of the universe is illogical because it implies limitation in God, which you do not admit.' Then he entered into one of his wonderful expositions of the salient features of the Advaita Vedānta.

'In the questions which usually followed a talk on this subject, there was almost sure to be the question, 'But, Swami, what will become of one's individuality when he realises his oneness with God?' He would laugh at this question, and playfully ridicule it. He would say: 'You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid-u-al-i-ties,' drawing out the word in laughing mockery. 'Why, you are not individuals yet. When you know God you will be. When you realise your whole nature, you will attain your true individualities, not before. In knowing God you cannot lose anything worth having. . . . There is another thing I am constantly hearing in this country, and that is that we should 'live in harmony with nature!' 'Har-mo-ny with nature,' he ridiculed. 'Why, don't you know that all the progress ever made in the world was made by fighting nature, by conquering nature? There never has been an exception. Trees live in harmony with nature. Perfect harmony there; no opposition there,—and no progress. We are to resist nature at every point if we are to make any progress. Something funny happens and nature says, 'cry,' and we cry—'

" 'But,' interposed an old lady in the audience, 'it would be very hard not to mourn for those we love, and I think we would be very hard-hearted if we did not mourn.' 'O yes, Madam,' he replied, 'it is hard, no doubt. But what of that? All great accomplishments are hard. Nothing worth

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while comes easy. But don't lower the ideal because it is difficult to attain. Hold the banner of freedom aloft! You do not weep, Madam, because you want to, but because nature forces you. When nature says—'Weep!' say 'No! I shall not weep!' Strength! Strength! Strength!—say that to yourself day and night. You are the Strong! The Pure! The Free! No weakness in you; no sin; no misery!'

"Such statements, vitalised by his tremendous personality, placed him in the same class with the world's greatest spiritual teachers. During these lectures, one was suspended in a spiritual firmament by the proximity of a Soul to whom the world was really a joke, and to whom Consciousness, super-cosmic, was the One and only Reality.

"The Swami was blessed with an irrepressible sense of humour, which enlivened his lectures and classes, and at times relieved the tenseness of embarrassing situations. Observe his parry to the question incredulously hurled at him at the close of a lecture which culminated in an impassioned outburst on the glory of God-Consciousness: 'Swami, have you seen God!' 'What!' he returned, his face lighting up with a happy smile, 'Do I look like it,—a big fat man like me?'

"On another occasion while he was expounding Advaita, an old man, sitting in the front row, arose deliberately, and with a look which said as plainly as words, 'Let me get out of this place in a hurry,' hobbled down the aisle and out of the hall, pounding the floor with his cane at every step. The Swami apparently enjoyed the situation, for amusement overspread his features as he paused to watch him. The attention of the audience was divided between the Swami, smiling, fun-loving, and the disgusted old man who had had enough of him.

"The whimsical, playful side of the Swami's character would break out at any moment. Certain Theosophic and New Thought students were interested primarily in occult phenomena. One such asked, 'Swami, have you ever seen an elemental?' 'O yes. We have them in India for breakfast,' was the quick reply. Nor did he hesitate to joke about his own personality. At one time when looking at some works of art the Swami, surveying a painting of some corpulent monks, remarked, 'Spiritual men are fat. See, how fat I am!' Again, speaking about the power of prophecy in the saints he said, 'Once when I was a little boy playing in the streets, a sage, passing by, put his hand on my head and said, 'My boy, you will be a great man some day.' And now see where I am!' At this little conceit his face fairly beamed with fun. There

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was nothing egotistical in such statements. His simple fun-loving nature carried his hearers along with him in the spirit of his joke. At another time: 'The Christian idea of hell is not at all terrifying to me. I have read Dante's *Inferno* three times, but I must say that I find nothing terrible in it. There are many kinds of Hindu hells. When a glutton dies, for instance, he is surrounded by great quantities of the very best kinds of food. He has a stomach a thousand miles long, and a mouth as small as a pinhead! Think of that!' During this lecture he got very warm owing to the poor ventilation. On leaving the hall after the lecture, he was met by a chill blast of north wind. Gathering his coat tightly about him he said vehemently, 'Well, if *this* isn't hell, I don't know what is.'

'Dilating on the life of the Sannyâsin as compared to that of the householder he said, 'Someone asked me if I was ever married.' Here he paused to glance smilingly over the audience. A multitudinous titter was the response. Then the smile giving place to a look of horror, he continued. 'Why, I wouldn't be married for anything. It is the devil's own game.' Here he paused as though to give his words effect. Then raising his hand to check the audible appreciation that had begun, he went on with a quite serious expression overspreading his features, 'There is one thing, however, that I have against the monastic system, and that is,'—(another pause) '—that it takes the best men away from the community.' He did not attempt to stem the outburst that followed. He had his little joke and enjoyed it. On another occasion while speaking seriously he suddenly broke out in merriment, 'As soon as a man gets a little sense he dies. He begins by having a big stomach which sticks out farther than his head. When he gains wisdom his stomach disappears and his head becomes prominent. Then he dies.'

'The Swami's assimilation of the world's maturest religious thought and his consummate power in expounding it, contrasted curiously with his youthful appearance, and much conjecture was rife as to his age. He must have known this, for he availed himself of an opportunity to have a little fun on this point at the expense of the audience. Alluding to his own age, which was *apropos* of the subject, he said, 'I am only—' (breathless pause, anticipation)—'of a few years,' he added mischievously. A sigh of disappointment ran over the audience. The Swami looked on waiting for the applause, which he knew was ready to break out. He enjoyed his own jokes as much



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as did the audience. Once he laughed outright at some particularly pointed joke which he had just told. The house was in an uproar at once. The joke is irretrievably lost. What a pity! During his series of lectures on *The Ideals of India*, the fact was disclosed that he was a wonderful 'story-teller. Here, perhaps, he was at his best. He gave life to the ancient tales by telling them in his inimitable fashion, the subject giving full play to his unsurpassed power of interpretation, and to that wealth of facial expression which was his greatest personal charm. 'I love to tell these stories,' he said. 'They are the life of India. I have heard them since babyhood. I never get tired of telling them.'

"The Swami commanded reverence when he revealed himself at times to his audience in one of those wonderful waves of transcendental feeling which he did not try to check. As when he said, 'All faces are dear to me. . . . As it is possible to 'see Helen in an Ethiop's face,' so we must learn to see the Lord in all. All, even the very worst, are Mother's children. The universe, good and bad, is but the play of the Lord.'

"In private interviews he was the ideal host, entering into conversation, argument or story-telling, not only without restraint, but with apparent enjoyment. His personal appearance on my first interview was a pleasurable shock from which I have never fully recovered. He had on a long grey dressing gown, and was sitting cross-legged on a chair, smoking a pipe, his long hair falling in wild disarray over his features. As I advanced he extended a cordial hand and bade me be seated. Memory delivers but fragments of those interviews. What remains vivid is the contact with the great Sannyâsin—the impressions and impetus received—which refuses to be less than the greatest experience in life.

"Speaking of spiritual training for the mind he said, 'The less you read the better. What are books but the vomitings of other men's minds? Why fill your mind with a load of stuff you will have to get rid of? Read the Gita and other good works on Vedânta. That is all you need.' Then again 'The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts, if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will. . . . It took three readings for

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me to memorise Macaulay's History of England, while my mother memorised any sacred book in only one reading. . . . People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though a rather crude one: A man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes with other men. She's a terror! But, poor fellow, he can't take his mind away from her, and so he suffers.'

"I asked him to explain why the practice of begging, common among religious mendicants, was not opposed to renunciation. He replied, 'It is a question of the mind. If the mind anticipates, and is affected by the results—that is bad, no doubt. The giving and receiving of alms should be free; otherwise it is not renunciation. If you should put a hundred dollars on that table for me, and should expect me to thank you for it you could take it away again. I would not touch it. My living was provided for before I came here, before I was born. I have no concern about it. Whatever belong to a man he will get. It was ready for him before he was born.'

"To the question, 'What do you think about the Immaculate Conception of Jesus?' he replied: 'That is an old claim. There have been many in India who have claimed that. I don't know anything about it. But for my part, I am glad that I had a natural father and mother.' 'But isn't such a theory opposed to the law of nature?' I ventured. 'What is nature to the Lord? It is all His play,' he replied as he knocked the ash from his pipe against the heel of his slipper, regardless of the carpeted floor. Then blowing through the stem to clear it, he continued, 'We are slaves of nature. The Lord is the Master of nature. He can do as He pleases. He can take one or a dozen bodies at a time, if He chooses, and in any way He chooses. How can we limit Him?'

"After answering at length various questions about Râja Yoga, he concluded with a friendly smile, 'But why bother about Râja Yoga? There are other ways.'

"This interview was continued fifteen minutes beyond the time set for a class on Râja Yoga to be held in the front room of the house. We were interrupted by the lady in charge of affairs, rushing into the room and exclaiming, 'Why, Swami! You have forgotten all about the Yoga class. It is fifteen minutes past time now, and the room is full of people.' The Swami arose hastily to his feet, exclaiming to me, 'O, excuse me! We will now go to the front room.' I walked through the hall to the front room. He went through his bedroom,

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which was between the room we had been sitting in and the front room. Before I was seated he emerged from his room with his hair, (which I have said was in a state of wild disorder) neatly combed, and attired in his Sannyâsin robe! Not more than one minute had elapsed from the time he started from his room with dishevelled hair and in lounging attire, till he came leisurely out into the front room ready to lecture. Speed and precision of action were evidently at his command. It was difficult at times, however, to persuade him to stir beyond the pace he had set for himself. When late for a lecture, for instance, it was sometimes impossible to induce him to hurry for the street car. In response to entreaties to hurry, he would drawl, 'Why do you hurry me? If we don't catch that car, we will catch the next.'

"At these Yoga classes one came closer to the man and teacher than was possible in the lecture hall. The contact was more personal and the influence more direct. The embodiment of holiness, simplicity and wisdom, he seemed speaking with incisive power, and drawing one's mind more to God and renunciation than to proficiency in Râja Yoga practices.

"After delivering a short lecture, he would seat himself cross-legged on the divan and direct in meditation such of the audience as remained for that purpose. His talk was on Râja Yoga, and the practical instruction on simple breathing exercises. He said in part: 'You must learn to sit correctly; then to breathe correctly. This develops concentration; then comes meditation. . . . When practising breathing, think of your body as luminous. . . . Try to look down the spinal cord from the base of the brain to the base of the spine. Imagine that you are looking through the hollow Sushumnâ to the Kundalini rising upward to the brain. . . . Have patience. Great patience is necessary.'

"Such as voiced doubts and fears, he reassured by his, 'I am with you now. Try to have a little faith in me.' One was moved by his persuasive power when he said, 'We learn to meditate that we may be able to think of the Lord. Râja Yoga is only the means to that end. The great Patanjali, author of the Râja Yoga, never missed an opportunity to impress that idea upon his students. Now is the time for you who are young. Don't wait till you are old before you think of the Lord, for then you will not be able to think of Him. The power to think of the Lord is developed when you are young.'

"Seated cross-legged on the divan, clothed in his Sannyâsin

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garb, with hands held one within the other on his lap, and with his eyes apparently closed, he might have been a statue in bronze, so immovable was he. A Yogi, indeed! Awake only to transcendental thought, he was the ideal, compelling veneration, "love and devotion."

It is with these thoughts that one closes this record of the last visit of the Swami to America, and travels on with him to other scenes in other lands. On July 20, the Swami sailed for Paris where further fame and honour awaited him.

## XXXVI

### THE PARIS CONGRESS AND A TOUR IN EUROPE

From August 1, 1900, when he is seen in Paris, until the middle of the following December when he returned unexpectedly to India, the Swami stayed mostly in Paris with short visits to Lannion in the province of Brittany, Vienna, Constantinople, Athens and Egypt.

In Paris he was at first the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett at their handsome residence in the Place des Etats Unis. Later, on his return from Brittany, where he was the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull, he lived with Monsieur Jules Bois, a famous philosopher, journalist, writer, and student of comparative religion, in order that thereby he might become more proficient in the French language, as his host and his household spoke nothing but French.

While the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami met numerous distinguished people at their large and lavish entertainments and numerous *salons*, where celebrated men of all departments of knowledge and culture gathered—poets, philosophers, professors, sculptors, painters, scientists, singers, actors and actresses and moralists. The conversaziones proved splendid opportunities for him to spread his message and exchange ideas with many leading thinkers of the West.

The main event of his stay in Paris was his appearance at the Congress of the History of Religions then in session at Paris in connection with the Paris Exposition Universelle. For this occasion the Swami

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had prepared himself for two months, endeavouring to master the French language so that he could deliver his lectures in that tongue. Within that time he found that he could speak French with sufficient ease to make the intricate terms of Sanskrit philosophy readily intelligible to his hearers.

The Congress of the History of Religions had been substituted for a real Parliament of Religions which had been the primary idea of the organisers of the Congress. Rumour had it that, owing to the vehement opposition of the Roman Catholic world, the idea of holding another Parliament of Religions had been defeated because of the fear that Oriental ideas might jeopardize the safety of orthodox Christianity. Therefore, at the Paris Congress no discussion on the views and doctrines of any religion was allowed. Its purpose was only to enquire into the historic evolution of the different forms of established faiths and other facts incidental to it. Accordingly, missionary sects of different religions and their beliefs were not represented in the Congress; it was attended only by such scholars as devoted themselves to the study of the origin and history of different religions. Though he was present at several sittings of the Congress, the Swami's ill-health prevented him from lecturing before that assembly more than twice. He had been appointed by the committee to debate with the Western Orientalists as to whether the Vedic religion was the outcome of nature-worship or not. The prominent position he had attained as the spokesman of the Vedânta philosophy and Indian culture in the West, and his numerous lectures and writings, which the Westerners either read or heard, made it evident that he, above all others, was best fitted to interpret the Indian position.

His first words at the Congress were in connec-

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tion with the paper read by Mr. Gustav Oppert, a German Orientalist, who endeavoured to trace the origin of the Sâlagrâma-Silâ and the Siva-Lingam to mere phallicism. To this the Swami objected, adducing proofs from the Vedas, and particularly the Atharva Veda Samhitâ, to the effect that the Siva-Lingam had its origin in the idea of the Yupa-Stambha or Skambha, the sacrificial post, idealised in Vedic ritual as the symbol of the Eternal Brahman. "As, afterwards," said the Swami, "the Yajna (sacrificial) fire, its smoke, ashes and flames, the Soma plant, and the bull that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice,—gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Siva's body, his tawny matted-hair, his blue throat and the riding on the bull of Siva, and so on;—just so, the Yupa-Skambha gave place in time to the Siva-Lingam, and was deified to the high Devahood of Sri Sankara." Then, also, the Siva-Lingam might have been more definitely developed through the influence of Buddhism, with its Bauddha Stupa, or memorial Topes, in which the relics, either of the Buddha himself, or of some great Buddhist Bhikshus, used to be deposited. It was quite probable that during the Buddhistic ascendancy the Hindus adopted this custom and used to erect memorials resembling their Skambha. The Sâlagrâma-Silâs were natural stones, resembling the artificially-cut stones of the Dhâtu Garbha, or "metal-wombed" stone-relic-cases of the Bauddha Stupas, and thus being first worshipped by the Bauddhas gradually were adopted into Vaishnavism. The explanation of the Sâlagrâma-Silâ as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention. It had been a degenerate period in India following the downfall of Buddhism, which had brought on the association of sex with the Siva-Lingam. In reality, the Siva-Lingam

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and the Sâlagrâma-Silâ had no more to do with Sex-worship than the Holy Communion in Christianity had in common with cannibalism.”

In his second lecture the Swami dilated on the Vedas as the common basis of Hinduism as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India, the priority of Sri Krishna to Buddha and the alleged influence of Greek thought and art on Indian culture. The Gita, the Swami held, was prior to, if not contemporaneous with, the Mahabharata. Both the thought and the language of the Gita were the same as those of the Mahabharata; therefore, how could the Gita have been later than the Mahabharata? And if it had been compiled much later, in the Buddhist period, why, when it attempted the reconciliation of all the religious creeds prevalent in India at that period, should the Gita not have mentioned Buddha and Buddhism, if Buddhism were then in existence? He said that Krishna was several centuries prior to Buddha, and that the worship of Krishna was much older than that of Buddha.

And as for Greek influence on Indian culture he denied the contention that it was on everything Indian,—Indian literature, Indian art, Indian astrology, Indian arithmetic, and so on. There might be, it was true, some similarity between the Greek and Indian terms in astronomy and so forth, but the Westerners had ignored the direct Sanskrit etymology and sought for some far-fetched etymology from the Greek. That such shallow and biased learning had been manifested by many Orientalists in the West was most deplorable. From a single Sanskrit Sloka, that reads, “The Yavanas are Mlechchhas, in them this science is established, therefore, even they deserve worship like Rishis, . . .”, in the West they have gone so far as to declare that all Indian



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sciences are but echoes of the Greek! Whereas a true reading of the Sloka might show that the Mlechchha disciples of the Aryans are herein praised, in order to encourage them to a further study of the Aryan sciences. The effort to trace the Indian drama to Greek sources was also preposterous, for nothing in the Sanskrit dramas bore any similarity, either to Greek literary methods or to Greek histrionic forms. Lastly, turning Professor Max Müller's own premises against him, the Swami argued that unless one Hindu who had known Greek could be brought forward, one ought not to talk even of Greek influence on Indian science or culture. The Swami closed his arguments with the sound counsel that Western Orientalists, who spent so much time on a single Greek work should do likewise with Sanskrit works; then only some true account of the exchange of ideas between East and West, in various historic periods, could be gathered. Like Pythagoras, the celebrated Greek, whom Clement of Alexandria had no hesitation in calling a pupil of the Brâhmanas, they might even come to India to learn.

After the lecture, many present expressed their opinion that the views of the modern school of Sanskrit scholars in the West were largely the same as those of the Swami. They agreed also with his statement that there was much that was historically true in the Purânas and Hindu traditions. But the learned President of the Congress, however, differed from the Swami with reference to the contemporaneousness of the Gita and the Mahabharata, his reason being that the majority of Western Orientalists thought that the former was not a part of the latter.

While in Paris, both before and after the Congress, the Swami busied himself with observations on French culture. Many of these he embodied in his

article *The East and the West*. In this connection, the Paris Exposition afforded him unique opportunities for study. He visited the Exhibition on numerous occasions, always bringing therefrom some new revelation, new contrast, or intellectual discovery. The varied and artistic exhibits pleased the fastidious eye of the Swami, and nothing of interest escaped his keen glance. The authorities of the Exposition received him with honour and he was accorded every opportunity for original observation.

Among the distinguished persons with whom he came into intimate contact during his stay in Paris, were Professor Patrick Geddes of Edinburgh University, Monsieur Jules Bois, Péré Hyacinthe, Mr. Hiram Maxim, Madame Calvé, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Princess Demidoff, and his own countryman, Dr. J. C. Bose, who had also been invited to attend the Exposition in connection with the Congress of Scientists, and who by his remarkable discoveries had thrilled the whole scientific world. He met Dr. Bose frequently, and he would point out to his numerous acquaintances the greatness of this Indian scientist, "the pride and glory of Bengal." Once at a distinguished gathering, when a disciple of a certain celebrated English scientist laid claim to the fact that her master was experimenting on the growth of a stunted lily, the Swami replied humorously, "O, that's nothing! Bose will make the very pot in which the lily grows respond!"

It was after the Congress of the History of Religions that the Swami accepted the invitation of Mrs. Ole Bull, to become her guest in a cottage she had taken at Lannion in Brittany. Here he gave himself up to leisure and retreat, though his conversations with those who surrounded him, including Sister

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Nivedita, now returned from America and likewise the guest of Mrs. Bull, were unusually luminous. The story of Lord Buddha was much in his mind in these days and one finds him reciting passages from the *Jâtakas*, or the *Lalita Vistâra*, or the *Vinaya Pitaka* and other great Buddhist works. He would tell how after the Nirvâna of Buddha, he became the very embodiment of the highest spiritual poetry, and he would illustrate his thoughts with beautiful passages from the Buddhist scriptures relating to the famous *Upâli Prichcha*, or the "Questions of Upâli, the Barber," or to the "Dhaniya Sutta" from the famous *Sutta Nipata*. Drawing philosophical contrasts, he would show the points of difference between the Buddhist and the Advaita positions, and then point out the unity of ideas between the Sublime Negation of the Buddhist and the Supreme Negation of Advaita, saying, "Buddhism must be right! Reincarnation is only a mirage! But this vision is to be reached by the path of Advaita alone!" In his final summing up of statement in this connection he said, "The great point of contrast between Buddhism and Hinduism lies in the fact that Buddhism said, 'Realise all this as illusion,' while Hinduism said, 'Realise that within the illusion is the Real.' Of *how* this was to be done, Hinduism never presumed to enunciate any rigid law. The Buddhist command could only be carried out through monasticism; the Hindu might be fulfilled through any state of life. All alike were roads to the One Real. One of the highest and greatest expressions of the Faith is put into the mouth of a butcher, preaching, by the orders of a married woman, to a Sannyâsin. Thus Buddhism became the religion of a monastic order, but Hinduism, in spite of its exaltation of monasticism remains ever

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the religion of faithfulness to daily duty, whatever it be, as the path by which man may attain to God." Hinduism, he held, included not only all the faiths within her own fold but the message of Buddhism and Buddha himself as well. She as the mother of religions had learned to regard Buddha as the most lion-hearted of all her Avatârs.

One of the most powerful factors which contributed to the Swami's supreme veneration for Buddha was, to quote Sister Nivedita's words:

"The spectacle of the constant tallying of his own Master's life, lived before his eyes, with this world-attested story of twenty-five centuries before. In Buddha, he saw Ramakrishna Paramahansa: in Ramakrishna he saw Buddha. In a flash this train of thought was revealed, one day when he was describing the scene of the death of Buddha. He told how the blanket had been spread for him beneath the tree, and how the Blessed One had lain down, 'resting on his right side, like a lion,' to die, when suddenly there came to him one who ran, for instruction. The disciples would have treated the man as an intruder, maintaining peace at any cost about their Master's death-bed, but the Blessed One overheard, and saying, 'No, no! He who was sent (Lit. the Tathâgata, 'A word,' the Swami explained, 'which is very like your Messiah') is ever ready,' he raised himself on his elbow and taught. This happened four times, and then, and then only, Buddha held himself free to die. . . .

"The immortal story went on to its end. But to one who listened, the most significant moment had been that in which the teller paused at his own words,—'raised himself on his elbow and taught'—and said in brief parenthesis, '*I saw this, you know, in the case of Ramakrishna Paramahansa!*' And there arose before the mind the story of one, destined to learn from that Teacher, who had travelled a hundred miles, and arrived at Cossipore only when he lay dying. Here also the disciples would have refused admission, but Sri Ramakrishna intervened, insisting on receiving the new-comer, and teaching him."

Sometimes it would give the Swami pleasure to play off Sankaracharya against Buddha, as it were,

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by calling in Advaita to the aid of Buddhism. The combination of the heart of Buddha and the intellect of Sankaracharya, he considered the highest possibility of humanity, and this he saw only in his own Master amongst the muster-roll of the world's Teachers and Saviours.

The Swami was always the religious observer. In some small chapel in Brittany, or in the great cathedrals of Paris, he saw the points of similarity between the ritual of Hinduism and Roman Catholicism; and in this sense he once proclaimed, "Christianity is not foreign to the Hindu mind." It was in Brittany, when he paid a visit on Michaelmas Day with his hostess and fellow-guests to Mont Saint Michael, that, looking at the dungeon-cages where prisoners were isolated in mediæval times, he was heard to remark under his breath: "What a wonderful place for meditation!" At another time, filled with a consciousness of the Power that worked through him, he exclaimed: "All that is against me must be with me in the end. Am I not HER soldier?"

Some days before he left Brittany his disciple, Sister Nivedita, left for England, there to try to raise interest in her work on behalf of Indian women. Before she went he gave her his blessing and said, "There is a peculiar sect of Mohammedans who are reported to be so fanatical that they take each new-born babe and expose it, saying, 'If God made thee, perish! If Ali made thee, live!'" Now this which they say to the child, I say, but in the opposite sense, to you, tonight—"Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!" On this occasion, now that she was about to enter, for an indefinite period, on new paths of endeavour without his immediate guidance, the thought must have crossed his mind that old ties were

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perilous to a foreign allegiance. He had seen so many betrayals of honour that he seemed always to be ready for a new desertion. In any case, the moment was critical to the fate of the disciple, and this he did not fail to realise. Before she had left India, in his company, he had told her that she must resume, as if she had never broken them off, all her old habits and social customs of the West.

When he returned from Brittany to Paris the Swami again moved in the most distinguished circles. In all his talks he missed no opportunity of showing, in ways distinctly his own, the influence of India over the entire thought of mankind. He would refer to the unmistakable evidences of Hindu religious ideas having travelled in ancient times from India, on the one side to Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Australia, and even as far as the shores of America, and on the other side, to Tibet, China, Japan, and as far up as Siberia. He would dilate on the extension of the Buddhist missionary work in Syria, Egypt, Macedonia and Epirus in the reigns, respectively, of Antiochus Theos, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Antigonos Gonates and Alexander. Then, perhaps, he would tell his interested visitors, of the influence of the Tartars in the making of universal history, and of their later conquest in Central and Western Asia, and finally in India itself. And oftentimes he would say, "The Tartar is the wine of the race! He gives energy and power to every blood!" He saw Europe as the admixture of numbers of Asiatic and Semi-Asiatic races, intermingled with the barbarians of the forests of Germany and the wildernesses of ancient Gaul and Spain. He saw European culture as formed, to a large extent, by Moorish influence in Spain and the learning and science of the mediæval Arabs. The monumental learning and patriotism which the Swami

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evinced, captured all minds and hearts. He was scathing in his denunciation of the claim that European dominated Asiatic culture; and history and archæology and philosophy were always at his service to prove his contentions to the contrary.

One of the greatest intimates at this time was Père Hyacinthe, the whilom Carmelite monk. As a monk he exerted a great influence in France and in the whole Catholic world by his learning, oratory and austerities. He was excommunicated in 1869 for persisting in denouncing the abuses of the Church. He obtained a dispensation from his monastic vows and became the Abbé Loyson; but he protested against the declaration of papal infallibility and sided with the Old Catholics. In 1872 he married an American lady and became known as Monsieur Charles Loyson. These episodes in his life created a stir in Europe at the time. The Roman Catholics hated him, the Protestants welcomed him with open arms. The aged Loyson was devoting his time to a reconciliation of the many conflicting views prevalent in Christianity, and to the study of comparative religion. In the Swami's own words, "He was possessed of a very sweet nature, modest and of the temperament of a Bhakta." Many were the times when the Swami who always called him by his old monastic name and the Père had long discussions on religious subjects and the spiritual life, and on sects and creeds; on these occasions the Swami spoke eloquently to him of Vairâgyam and renunciation, and the old memories of monastic life were stirred up in the heart of the erstwhile monk. Later on, he with his wife accompanied the Swami and his party in their travels to Constantinople. They met again at Scutari in Asia Minor, whither the Père had proceeded on his journey to Jerusalem to bring about a

her duty—to keep him from too great an abstraction of mind. Whenever he was her guest, she made him feel that he was free to come and go as the spirit moved him. Others would ply him with questions, but not Miss MacLeod. Her buoyant nature amused him. Yet sometimes he would pour forth in her presence some of the most soul-inspiring utterances of his whole life. From the first she “recognised” the Swami as a Messenger of the Spirit, a Christ-Soul, and became an ardent champion of his cause. She had already studied the Gita and her vision was moulded according to its teaching. She came to India as we have seen from America in company with Mrs. Ole Bull and the Swami Saradananda and with other Western disciples, spent many days with the Swami, living in the neighbourhood of the monastery at Belur. To her he was Master and friend in one; and to this day her memories of the Swami are numerous and interesting.

After almost three months’ sojourn in France, the Swami left Paris on the night of October 24, by the Oriental Express Train. His companions were Monsieur and Madame Loyson, M. Jules Bois, Madame Calvé and Miss Josephine MacLeod. Madame Calvé had decided not to sing that winter but to rest in the temperate climate of Egypt, and the Swami went as her guest. On the evening of the twenty-fifth the party reached Vienna, where a stop of three days was made. Here the many places of interest were visited, notably the Schönbrunn Palace, near Vienna, where Napoleon’s son had been kept almost as a prisoner, and had died of a broken heart,—an episode immortalised in a play, named *L’aiglon* (the Young Eagle), which the Swami had recently seen played by Sarah Bernhardt. He was interested in finding that every room of this



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Palace was furnished and decorated with the art and workmanship of some special country. India and China had not been forgotten, and he was specially pleased with the Indian decorations. The museum was also visited, and its scientific section and Dutch paintings were especially interesting. But all other cities of Europe after Paris were disappointing to him. Of Austria he remarked, "If Turkey is called 'The sick man of Europe,' Austria ought to be called, 'The sick woman of Europe!'"

On October 28, the party took the Oriental Express for Constantinople which they reached on the thirtieth, having passed through Hungary, Servia, Roumania and Bulgaria *en route*. When they arrived they had trouble with the customs which confiscated all their books and papers. After heated discussion and pulling of wires by Madame Calvé and Jules Bois, all but two of the books were returned.

The day after their arrival in Constantinople the Swami and Miss MacLeod decided to visit Scutari, which lies across the strip of water that separates Europe from Asia Minor, and see Père Hyacinthe who was on his way to Palestine. Some difficulty was experienced because neither could speak Turkish nor Arabic. By signs they managed to hire a boat to take them to Scutari, where the Swami visited Père Hyacinthe. That day he had his meal in the Scutari cemetery, no better place being found. The trip back to Constantinople proved somewhat difficult, as the boat in which they had come was found only after a long search, and they were landed on the opposite shore far from their hotel. The Swami made his stay in Constantinople useful in various ways; every centre of interest was visited; he saw the museum, the sarcophagi, the charming scenery from the top of the

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place from which the daily gun was fired, the foreign quarters, and the old wall within which was the dreaded jail.

He met several distinguished persons, both in Vienna and in Constantinople, through the letters of introduction he had brought with him from Mr. Maxim. Thus in Constantinople he dined with a French *Chargé d'affaires*, made the acquaintance of a Greek Pasha and also of an Albanian celebrity. As Père Hyacinthe was not permitted to speak publicly in Constantinople, the Swami also was denied permission to do so. Several private conversazioni and drawing-room lectures were, however, arranged for him, at which he spoke on the religion of the Vedânta to select audiences.

After several days in Constantinople the Swami and his friends took steamer for Athens, seeing the Golden Horn and the Islands of Marmora *en route*, where he visited a Greek monastery and was much impressed with what he saw. On one of the islands he met the distinguished Prof. Lepper, whom he had known when he was a Professor in the Pachappa's College in Madras. In another of these islands he saw the ruins of a temple on the seashore, which he thought must have been dedicated to Neptune.

Four days after he had arrived in Athens, the Swami embarked on the Russian steamer *Czar* for Egypt. In Egypt he was especially interested in the Cairo museum, and his mind often reverted, in all the vividness of his historic imagination, to the reigns of those Pharaohs who had made Egypt mighty and a world-power in the days of old. And yet, in his inmost heart, he was withdrawn from all external matters. The underlying vanity of everything had made him reflect powerfully on the terrible bondage of Mâyâ. The Sphinx and the Pyramids

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brought on, as it were, a world-weariness. The meditative habit, which had revealed itself ever since his second visit to the West in intenser forms, now reached a veritable climax. In Paris, oftentimes his mind had been far aloof from his environment; and here in Egypt it seemed as if he were turning the last pages in the Book of Experience. Even the days spent on the Nile amidst the glories of ancient temples and rich scenery did not affect him. And one who was with him at the time said: "How tired and world-weary he seemed!"

And then there were other reasons! In far-off India Mr. Sevier, his great friend and disciple, had left the body; and the Swami had perceived this intuitively. He became restless to return to India. Thus one day quite suddenly he told his companions that he would depart for India. They were all saddened at this news. Madame Calvé using a Roman Catholic expression had always addressed him as *Mon Père*, "My Father." To Miss MacLeod he was Guru and friend in one, to Monsieur Bois he was a great thinker and Man of God. So it was with a feeling, partly of sadness and partly of resignation, that they saw him last when he extended his hands to them in a final benediction.

He boarded the first steamer for India, a Peninsular and Oriental vessel. When the steamer touched the shores of India, he was beside himself with joy. His longing to be with his Gurubhais and disciples was now about to be realised. His home-coming was entirely *incognito*. Only, on the way from Bombay to Calcutta did he meet with Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya. They stared at each other for a moment in astonishment and entered into joyous conversation.

Late at night on December 9, 1900, the Swami arrived at the Belur monastery. His brother-

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monks and the Brahmachârinns were taking their meal, when the gardener out of breath came running in to tell them, "A Saheb has come!" Immediately there was much excitement and speculation as to who the Saheb might be who had come at that late hour and what his business with them could be. Then to their great surprise the Saheb rushed into their midst; and when they all saw who the Saheb was, there was no sleeping that night. "O Swamiji has come! Swamiji has come!" they all cried out excitedly. They could not believe their eyes. At once an Asana (seat) was spread for him and he was served with a large helping of the Khichrhi which was the food prepared for that night. He partook of it with great zest, as it was many months since he had tasted it. Later the monks enjoyed several delightful hours, while the Swami chatted to them about his varied experiences in the West. They were happy beyond measure. He had come back to them, altogether unexpectedly. No words can describe their feeling. And now, though they knew it not, he was to be with them till the end.

The Swami said that when he had first visited the Occident, he was impressed with its power and organisation and its apparent democracy; but now he saw that its commercial spirit was composed for the most part of greed, selfishness, and struggle for privilege and power. He was averse to the system of exploitation by which small business interests could be swallowed up by large combinations; that was tyranny indeed. "A strong combination he was able to admire, but what beauty of combination was there, amongst a pack of wolves?" He said to someone that his riper experience of Western life made it appear to him "like hell," and he held that China had gone nearer to the ideal conception of

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human ethics than newer countries had ever done or could do.

Before closing the chapter it will be interesting to know Sister Nivedita's impression of the Swami's bearing during his last visit to the West. She says:

"The outstanding impression made by the Swami's bearing, during all these months of European and American life, was one of almost complete indifference to his surroundings. Current estimates of value left him entirely unaffected. He was never in any way startled or incredulous under success, being too deeply convinced of the greatness of the Power that worked through him, to be surprised by it. But neither was he unnerved by external failure. Both victory and defeat would come and go. He was their witness. . . .

"He moved fearless and unhesitant through the luxury of the West. As determinedly as I had seen him in India, dressed in the two garments of simple folk, sitting on the floor and eating with his fingers, so, equally without doubt or shrinking, was his acceptance of the complexity of the means of living in America or France. Monk and king, he said, was obverse and reverse of a single model. From the use of the best, to the renunciation of all, was but one step. India had thrown all her prestige in the past, round poverty. Some prestige was in the future to be cast round wealth.

"Rapid changes of fortune, however, must always be the fate of one who wanders from door to door, accepting the hospitality of foreign peoples. These reversals he never seemed to notice. No institution, no environment, stood between him and any human heart. His confidence in that Divine-within-Man of which he talked, was as perfect, and his appeal as direct, when he talked with the imperialist aristocrat or the American millionaire, as with the exploited and oppressed. But the outflow of his love and courtesy was always for the simple.

"Thus, student and citizen of the world as others were proud to claim him, it was yet always on the glory of his Indian birth that he took his stand. And in the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk who stood revealed."

## XXXVII

### VISIT TO MAYAVATI

Before taking up the work that awaited him on his return to India, his first object was to visit Mrs. Sevier at the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. On his arrival at the Math on December 9, he had the confirmation of his premonition of the passing away of his beloved disciple, Mr. J. H. Sevier, which had occurred on October 28, 1900. He at once telegraphed to Mrs. Sevier to say that he would be going to Mayavati, the date to be made known before starting. In reply he was asked to inform her of the date of his coming at least eight days beforehand, to enable the Brotherhood to make the necessary arrangements. But the intimation about the Swami's arrival at Kathgodam railway station reached Mayavati at the eleventh hour. It was with great difficulty that the coolies and the Dandy-bearers were secured by the inmates of the Ashrama.

The Swami arrived at Kathgodam on the morning of the twenty-ninth in company with Swamis Sivananda and Sadananda. The Swami was feverish and was advised to rest for the day here, before undertaking the hardships of a hill journey. He could not have chosen a worse time for going to the hills. The winter of 1900-1901 was unusually severe, and particularly so during the days of his visit. The journey from the railway station to Mayavati—a distance of sixty-five miles—was by no means a pleasant one. There was a heavy snow-fall on the way. But the Swami kept the whole party in high spirits in spite of the bad weather.

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The Swami with his party arrived at Mayavati on January 3, 1901. When he caught a view of the site of the Ashrama and its buildings, he was much pleased. As he came to the stream in the cañon below, he heard the bell of the monastery striking twelve, and he was so anxious to reach the Ashrama that he mounted a horse and pressed on at full speed. The monastery had been artistically decorated for the occasion with evergreens and flowers.

Unfortunately most of the time during the Swami's stay Mayavati was covered with snow, so that he was compelled to remain indoors and could not take the long walks he enjoyed so much. He remained at Mayavati till the eighteenth, and received a number of visitors from the neighbouring places. It was evident that the Swami was in declining health. In spite of his high spirits, it could be seen that he was unable to stand any physical strain and several times he had slight attacks of asthma; yet he was only thirty-eight years of age.

His conversations were a constant source of inspiration to the Mayavati Brotherhood. One day in the course of a talk he suddenly got up from his seat and paced to and fro, with his voice raised and eyes aflame with emotion, as if he was lecturing to a huge audience. He was speaking of his Western disciples, of their exemplary devotion and loyalty to him, their readiness to rush into the jaws of death at his command,—and not one or two but dozens who would do the same,—how ‘they had served him lovingly, silently, right royally, and how they were ready to renounce everything for his sake, at one word from him. “Look at Captain Sevier,” cried the Swami, “how he died a martyr to the cause, at Mayavati!” On another occasion, speaking of obedience, he said: “Obedience and respect cannot be enforced by word

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of command; neither can it be exacted. It depends upon the *man*, upon his loving nature and exalted character. None can resist true love and greatness." At the same time he emphasised the necessity of loyalty to the work undertaken, loyalty to the organisation and loyalty to the man who is placed in charge of a centre.

One day he told Swami Swarupananda of his ideas about the work that he wished to be carried out at the Ashrama, and charged him to push on with them with great zeal and energy. The latter said that as for himself he would do all he could, but without the co-operation of the brother-monks of the Ashrama and their assurance of remaining for at least three consecutive years, the task was beyond his powers. The Swami understood and when all were gathered before him he broached the subject asking one after the other if he were willing to stay three years. All but Swami Virajananda acceded. When his turn came he humbly but firmly said that he intended to pass some time exclusively in meditation elsewhere, living upon Mâdhukari Bhikshâ. The Swami tried to dissuade him saying: "Don't ruin your health by practising austerities, but try to profit by our experience. We have subjected ourselves to extreme austerities, but what has been the result?—the break-down of our health in the prime of manhood, for which we are still suffering. Besides, how can you think of meditating for hours? Enough if you can concentrate your mind for five minutes, or even one minute; for that purpose only certain hours in the morning and evening are needed. The rest of the time you will have to engage yourself in studies or some work for the general good. My disciples must emphasise work more than austerities. Work itself should be a part of their Sâdhanâ and



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their austerities." Swami Virajananda admitted the truth of his Master's words, but respectfully submitted that for all that, austerity was needed to gain strength of character and to conserve the spiritual powers, which were imperative if one were to work without attachment. When he left the place the Swami acknowledged that at heart he knew that Swami Virajananda was right and appreciated his feelings, for he himself valued the life of meditation and the freedom of the monk. Recalling the memories of his Parivrâjaka days,—living on Bhikshâ, with the mind fixed on God and having no thought of the world, he declared that they were the happiest and sweetest days of his life, and that he would gladly give up anything in exchange for that obscurity that frees one from the cares and worries of public life.

Of the many points of view that one gains of the snows at Mayavati, that at Dharamghar, the highest hill within the Mayavati boundaries, affords the finest vision of the snow range. Here, shortly after his arrival, the Swami spent one morning with the inmates of the monastery. He was so pleased with the site and its charming scenery that he wished to have a hermitage erected on that very spot, where he could meditate in solitude undisturbed. His favourite walk was along the lake-side and one day he said to Mrs. Sevier, "In the latter part of my life, I shall give up all public work and pass my days in writing books and whistling merry tunes by this lake, free as a child!"

A shrine room containing the image of Sri Ramakrishna had recently been established at the Ashrama at the earnest desire of some of the inmates. One morning the Swami chanced to go into this room and saw that regular Pujâ was being conducted with flowers, incense and other offerings. He said

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nothing at the time, but that evening when all were gathered about the fireplace, he spoke vehemently, disapproving of ceremonial worship in an Advaita Ashrama. It should never have been done. Here attention was to be paid only to the subjective elements of religion, such as private meditation, individual and collective study of the scriptures, and the teaching and culture of the highest spiritual monism, free from any dualistic weakness or dependence. This Ashrama had been dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone. He had therefore the right to criticise. Though the Swami was emphatic in his criticism of the introduction of ritualistic worship there, he did not order them to break up the worship-room. He would not hurt the feelings of those who were responsible for it. That would be using his power. They ought to see their own mistake and rectify it. But the Swami's uncompromising attitude on the matter led to the discontinuance of the worship and, ultimately, to the dissolution of the shrine itself. One who still doubted if it was right for him to profess himself a member of the Advaita Ashrama when he leaned towards Dualism, appealed to the Holy Mother as a final resource, only to receive the reply: "Sri Ramakrishna was all Advaita and preached Advaita. Why should you not also follow Advaita? All his disciples *are* Advaitins!" When the Swami returned to the Belur Math, in alluding to the above occurrence he remarked: "I thought of having one centre at least where the external worship of Sri Ramakrishna would not find a place. But going there I found that the Old Man had already established himself even there! Well, well!"

The Swami was by no means idle at Mayavati. His correspondence was very large. Besides, he gave religious instruction to the inmates and wrote

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three essays for the *Prabuddha Bharata*, entitled "Aryans and Tamilians," "The Social Conference Address," and "Stray Remarks on Theosophy." The first of these articles shows remarkable historical insight. The second was a reply to Mr. Justice Ranade's Presidential Address at the Indian Social Conference of 1900. While admitting the remarkable liberalism and sincere patriotism which characterised the spirit of the great Marhatta leader, the Swami in this article denounces his criticism of the Sannyâsins. It is a passionate defence of Indian monasticism and of its intrinsic value in the light of Indian history. His "Stray Remarks on Theosophy" is a sincere and interesting criticism. Besides these, he made an excellent translation of the Nâsadiya Sukta of the Rig Veda at the special request of a friend, a distinguished man of science.

While the Swami was at Mayavati, the disciples out of their great love for their Guru served him in every possible way. Realising how difficult it is for a Westerner to understand the Hindu viewpoint as regards service to the Guru, he explained to a certain American disciple: "You see how they serve me! To a Westerner, this devotion may seem servile, and you may be shocked at the way I accept all this service without remonstrance. But you must understand the Indian idea, then everything will be clear to you. This is the spontaneous devotion of the disciple to the Guru. This service to the Guru is one of the means by which the disciple progresses in spirituality."

The Swami was confined to the house most of the time because of the snow, and as his physical condition was not strong enough to bear the severe cold, he became impatient to go down to the plains, and soon left for Pilibhit.

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All the way from Mayavati to Pilibhit the Swami was in excellent spirits. On the first night, at the Dak-bungalow at Champawat he talked with great fervour of Sri Ramakrishna, especially of his inner sight and of his judgment of men, and said that whatsoever his Master had predicted about men and matters, had invariably come to pass. Therefore, so far as his Gurubhais were concerned, his entire attitude was always influenced by what Sri Ramakrishna had said of them. Speaking of those few whom Sri Ramakrishna had specially classified as Isvarakotis, the Swami said that he had, by his own insight and repeated tests, satisfied himself as to their superior intrinsic excellence. He added that though he might not always approve of their ways and opinions, and even might say harsh words to them now and then, yet in his heart he always gave them a much higher position than to the others, because Sri Ramakrishna himself had done so, and this judgment he accepted as unerring and unassailable. Repeatedly he exclaimed: "And above all, above all, I am *loyal*! I am loyal to the core of my heart!"

On another occasion, speaking of the Isvarakotis, the Swami had said, "I can trust in them as I can in no one else. I know that even if the whole world were to desert me, they would stick to me and be ever faithful and ready to carry out my ideas and plans, even under the most impossible conditions." Sri Ramakrishna had marked out seven of his disciples as Isvarakotis. Isvarakotis, according to him, are those who have to take birth whenever an Incarnation is born; they are like His high officials belonging to the inmost circle of His devotees, His Antarangas Bhaktas, whose mission in life is to complement His work, and to conserve His teachings. Thus,

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strictly speaking, though they are born with Realisation, they have no Mukti, and their Sâdhanâs are, unconsciously intended only for the instruction of men. At the head of this class Sri Ramakrishna placed the Swami.

At Tanakpur riding-ponies were secured, for there was no railway from Tanakpur to Pilibhit at the time. Before reaching Pilibhit the Swami informed Swami Sivananda that he would have to leave them at Pilibhit and go forth by himself to beg money for the maintenance and improvement of the Belur Math. In this connection he said: "Each member of the Belur Math should go about preaching and teaching in India, and bring to the general fund at least two thousand rupees." Swami Sivananda bowed in assent to the command.

The Swami arrived at the Belur Math on January 24, 1901. About everything concerning the Advaita Ashrama, the Swami gave the highest praise. Its charming scenery, the precious soothing quiet of the Himalayan jungles, the loving kindness he had received from Mrs. Sevier, the unremitting service which had been so devoutly rendered him by the little band of disciples at his Himalayan centre—all these things, and many more, had made his visit to Mayavati a very happy one. In fact, he regretted that he had had to leave the hills so soon.

## XXXVIII

### A TRIP TO EAST BENGAL AND LIFE AT THE MATH

When the Swami arrived at Calcutta from Mayavati, on January 24, 1901, it was a great rejoicing to his Gurubhais and disciples there, who were anxious to have him again in their midst for a long period. Before leaving for Mayavati, the Swami had remained at the Belur monastery for eighteen days. This gave him, however, the opportunity to see the remarkable progress made in all directions during his absence in the West. Classes of various kinds were held, physical exercises were introduced, and there were appointed hours for meditation and spiritual exercise. New Brahmachârlins had joined the Order, and his own disciples and Gurubhais were strenuously occupied in studying, teaching, training and serving.

Once more with his followers and workers, the Swami's mind was full of plans, but he had been in the monastery barely seven weeks, when such pressing invitations came from Dacca and East Bengal that they could not be declined. In addition, there was the great desire of his own mother to go on a pilgrimage to the holy places in East Bengal and Assam. Still another reason for going was his declining health. Only those immediately about him knew how rapidly his health was going down. He himself saw that in his present condition, work of any kind requiring great concentration of mind and energy of will was impossible for him. The time he remained in Calcutta, therefore, he spent either at the monastery

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or at Balaram Babu's house in Baghbazar in the metropolis, his sole occupation being the private training and teaching of those about him, light reading or replying to correspondents from various quarters of the world.

It was on March 18, that the Swami left Calcutta in company with a large party of his Sannyâsin disciples. He arrived at Dacca on the next day. As soon as the steamer from Goalando reached Narayangunj, some resident gentlemen of Dacca, who had come as representatives of the reception committee, welcomed him cordially. When the train reached Dacca, Babu Ishwar Chandra Ghosh, the renowned pleader, and Babu Gagan Chandra Ghosh received him in the name of the people of the city. The railway station was filled with people who greeted him with enthusiastic shouts of "Victory to Ramakrishna Deva!" Many students of the various educational institutions of the city were present. The procession led through the main thoroughfares until it finally reached the mansion of the late Babu Mohini Mohan Das, Zamindar, which was arranged for the Swami's use during his sojourn in Dacca. Here scores of citizens had gathered to get a sight of the Swami.

As the Budhâshtami festival, an auspicious day for the Hindus, was near at hand, the Swami went by boat to Lângalbundh with his disciples and his mother's party of women-pilgrims, to bathe there in the Brahmaputra river. Tradition has sanctified Langalbundh, as Pourânic legends connect it with Sri Parasurâma. The festival draws large crowds, and from the passenger-boats go forth continuously joyous shouts of praise in honour of the Lord.

Both before and after his pilgrimage, his dwelling-place at Dacca was besieged by numerous

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visitors. To these he gave instructions at all hours of the day, particularly for two or three hours in the afternoon. More than a hundred persons attended these informal meetings daily. All were impressed by his gracious manner and charming personality, and found his teachings full of a living faith and devotion, and infused with intense vitality and power.

At the earnest request of the people of Dacca, the Swami lectured for an hour at the Jagannath College before two thousand people, taking for his subject, "What Have I Learnt?" The next day he again lectured for about two hours in the open maidan, adjoining the Pogose School to an audience of three thousand on "The Religion We Are Born In." Both the addresses were received with tremendous applause, and as a result hundreds were led to make a diligent study of his message and his plans for the amelioration of India.

A touching incident happened while the Swami was at Dacca. One day a young prostitute bedecked with jewellery came in a phaeton with her mother to see him. Jatin Babu, the host, and the disciples hesitated to admit them at first; word of their coming was brought to the Swami, and he at once accorded them an interview. After they had saluted him and sat down, the daughter told the Swami that she was suffering from asthma and begged him for some medicine to cure her. The Swami expressed his sympathy and replied: "See here, mother! I too am suffering from asthma and have not been able to cure myself. I wish I could do something for you." These words spoken with childlike simplicity and loving kindness touched the women as well as the audience.

From Dacca he next proceeded to the famous places of pilgrimage, Chandranâth and Kâmâkhya.



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sojourning for some days at Goalpara and at the beautiful station of Gauhati in Assam. At Gauhati he delivered three lectures.

Both at Dacca and later at Kamakhya, the Swami's health went from bad to worse. He decided to go to the delightful hill-station of Shillong, where the air being much drier, it was thought his health might improve. Shillong was then the seat of the Assam Government, and the late Sir H. E. A. Cotton, a champion of the cause of India, was the Chief Commissioner. He had heard much of Swami Vivekananda and was anxious to meet him. At his request, the Swami delivered a lecture before the resident English officials and a large gathering of Indians. Later, Sir Henry Cotton visited the Swami, exchanged greetings and spent some time in an interesting discussion about India and the solution of her national problems. Seeing that the Swami was ill, he instructed the Civil Surgeon to render him every possible medical aid. Throughout the Swami's long stay, the Chief Commissioner made daily inquiries about his health. The Swami spoke of him as a man who understood India's needs and aspirations and worked nobly for her cause and deserved the love of the Indian people.

The Swami's health was failing rapidly. Besides diabetes from which he had been suffering, he had had at Dacca another very severe attack of asthma. His disciples were very anxious when it was discovered that the climate of Shillong had done him no good. During the asthmatic attack, the Swami said half-dreamily, as if to himself: "What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years!" He felt that he could die in peace now that he had given his message to the world, and that if the Western nations accepted his spiritual ideals and India

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adopted his plans for her regeneration, there was work ahead of both sufficient for fifteen hundred years.

‘The Swami returned to the monastery at Calcutta in the second week of May. Of his experience in East Bengal and Assam he spoke much. In religious matters, he remarked, the people of those parts were very conservative, and even fanatical in some respects. Though his disciples observed the strictest orthodoxy there, he himself when plied with too many questions by a Don’t-touchist told him, ‘Man, I am a Fakir! What is caste or custom to me! Does not the Sâstra enjoin: ‘A Sannyâsin may live on Mâdhukari received even from the hands of a person of a Mlechchha family?’ ’

Speaking of fanaticism he related the story of a sentimental youth of Dacca, who showed the Swami a photograph asking him if the original was an Ayatâra. ‘My boy, how can I know?’ answered the Swami. But the boy repeated his question three or four times. ‘At last,’ narrated the Swami, ‘seeing that he desired an affirmative answer, I said, ‘My boy, take my advice; develop your muscles and your brain by eating good food and by healthy exercise, and then you will be able to think for yourself. Without nourishing food your brain seems to be a little weak.’ Perhaps the boy did not like to be told the plain truth. But what else could I do? Unless I warn such people they may become unbalanced.’

‘You may think of your Guru as an Avatâra,’ continued the Swami, ‘or whatever you like. But Incarnations of God are few and far between. There have arisen in Dacca itself three or four Avatâras, I heard! Indeed, there is a craze for them nowadays, it seems!’

Speaking of the physical aspects of the two

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provinces and of the people, he remarked that the Brahmaputra valley was beyond compare in beauty and that the beauty of the Shillong hills was charming. The people were much hardier and more active in type than those on the Calcutta side. What they did, they did in a dogged fashion. Though they took more of flesh and fish, and for that reason were stronger and more Râjasic than the West Bengal type, they used altogether too much oil and Ghee in their cooking, a thing which the Swami did not approve of, because it tended to obesity. He also observed that it was most desirable that the East and the West Bengal should be thoroughly harmonised and united.

One of the lay disciples questioned the Swami whether he had visited the home of Nag Mahasaya. The Swami replied most enthusiastically: "Yes, indeed! He was such a great saint! Is it likely that, being so near his birth-place, which is only seven or eight miles from Dacca, I would have failed to visit the house in which he had lived? How charming is his house, just like a peace retreat, a veritable place of pilgrimage! His worthy wife fed me with many excellent dishes cooked by her own hands. She was very motherly and insisted that I must eat to my heart's content. While there I had a swim in the tank, after which I had such a sound sleep that it was half-past-two in the afternoon before I awoke. Such sound sleep I have rarely experienced in my life. On getting up I had a sumptuous feast. Nag Mahasaya's wife gave me a cloth also, which I tied round my head as a turban and started for Dacca. I found that Nag Mahasaya's photo was being worshipped. The place of his Samâdhi, the spot where his ashes are kept, ought to be preserved in a better way than they are now. East Bengal will do well to study and appreciate that great soul, who

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has sanctified the whole province by his birth, and by living that wonderful life there.'"

After his return from the tour in East Bengal and Assam, which was the last public tour undertaken by the Swami, he was much worse in health. The monks were much concerned. They now urged him to have complete rest; they begged him to give up all thought of appearing before the public until he should be perfectly well. So the Swami, to please his Gurubhais and disciples, gave up his plans and lived at the monastery for seven months in comparative retirement. Those about him did all they could to nurse him back to health, to obtain for him the best medical treatment available, and to divert his mind to lighter subjects. But they found that the latter was an exceedingly difficult task, for his mind instinctively merged in the deepest concentration. Casual teaching he was always engaged in, even at this period. He also kept himself in touch with the general movement of his work in various parts of the world and was happy at the thought that everywhere, whether in America, or England or India itself, his ideas were gaining firmer ground. Oftentimes he would sing and teach his disciples to sing; or he would engage in conversation, now on gay and now on serious subjects. But on the latter occasions, his Gurubhais would immediately divert his mind to lighter matters, to relax its tension.

People flocked to the Belur monastery in these days from all parts of India to receive the Swami's blessings and instructions. His eyes watched all the manifold works of the Math to their minutest details, and even the servants he treated as his own kin. They vied with one another in rendering him even the slightest service. And whenever he went to Calcutta by boat, the rowers were as much interested in his

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personality as his own disciples. Sometimes he would go about in the monastery, with only a Kaupina on. Or in the long robe of the wandering monk he would stroll, immersed in thought, along the village-paths that led from the monastery gates to the high road. Or again, he would seat himself to meditate wherever he happened to be, by the Ganges, or under the spreading branches of some inviting tree in the monastery compound. Or it might be that he would spend the day in Calcutta, or with books in his own room at the Math. And often he would return to those fiery moods of old and make the monastery throb with his spiritual consciousness.

His more intimate discourses with his Gurubhais and disciples were of a most diverse and complex character. They included such topics as renunciation, Brahmacharya and the making of Real Men for the regeneration of the motherland, the music and literature of India, points of contact and contrast between European and Asiatic Art, Gurukula system, Nirvikalpa Samâdhi, presence of Divinity even in the lowest, eradication of Don't-touchism and God's mercy. These themes and others similar to these formed generally the topics which were both an instruction and a delight to his listeners. In fact, his discourses included the whole range of Hindu religion, philosophy, sociology, science and numerous other branches of knowledge, on which he dwelt in a masterly way throwing new light on them.

Often the Swami would be lost in song or meditation, dwelling in regions beyond this world. And yet on many days he himself would supervise the cooking arrangements and prepare delicacies for the inmates of the monastery. Now he would be visited by deeper moods brought on by thoughts of India

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and her problems, and in these moods he would make some casual remark that vibrated with great power. His remarks on even trifling matters would make the monks ponder over them. At all times he was an amazing personality, of which each new manifestation was, to those who loved him, both human and divine. Now he would explain an idea, making opposite sides equally convincing; again he would be the monk, the patriot, the scholar, or the saint. And all marvelled at the tremendous insight, partly inherent, partly acquired through the intensest study and observation, which he manifested in spite of his illness. Though his body was giving way to illness, his mind was luminous, and the brother disciples stood in awe of him in spite of the fact that they still regarded him as their "Naren." Disease might have ruined the body, but it could never touch the mind or the soul. As is the case with diabetes, he had periods of relief from pain and the sense of great exhaustion, and there were times when he felt as well as ever. At such moments particularly, his Gurubhais and friends implored him to rest. But he heeded their words only temporarily. It would have been much easier to move a mountain than to keep in check that mind which had taught the world. Besides, it was evident that his interest in life was waning. And his words, spoken in former times, came often to the minds of the disciples, "For one thing we may be grateful; this life is *not* eternal!" Through the very power of his thought he was loosening himself from the trammels of the body, and the time when he would give it up altogether was drawing very close.

He would sit in the upper verandah of the monastery, gazing intently at the turrets of the temple of the Mother, which loomed high above the trees of that grove of many memories at Dakshineswar. Lost

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in contemplation, his face would be ineffably sad or luminous with ecstasy. To the outside world, he was the famous Vivekananda, the preacher, the teacher and the patriot; to his brother-monks he was the monk, the saint, the leader, the friend, the master, the beloved one, the son of Sri Ramakrishna and the Mother,—their all-in-all.

Sometimes after a walk on the lawn of the monastery he would sit under the Vilva tree by which now stands his memorial temple, to rest or to meditate, and on many occasions he would lose consciousness of the outer world. Another favourite seat was under the big mango tree in the courtyard between Sri Ramakrishna's chapel and the monastery building. Here he would be found mostly in the morning hours seated on a canvas cot, attending to his correspondence, writing articles or books, reading, or engaged in conversation.

The Swami's room was on the second storey in the south-east corner of the monastery building. It was a large room with four windows and three doors, at one and the same time his study and living quarters. In the corner to the right of the entrance-door stood a mirror some five feet high, and a little further on, a rack with his Geruâ clothes. In the middle of the room was an iron bedstead fitted with a spring mattress, given to him by one of his Western disciples. But the Swami hardly used it preferring a simple bed on the floor. A couch, a knee-hole writing-table with letters and manuscripts, pen, ink, paper, a blotting-pad, a call-bell, some flowers in a metal vase, a photograph of the Master, a deer-skin Asana, and a small table with a set of porcelain tea-cups, saucers and plates completed the furnishings of the room. Most of these things were the gifts and presents from his Western disciples, and are now treasured at the Math

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with great care. But the most important object in the whole room was a picture of Sri Ramakrishna at which the Swami would gaze in love and reverence. In this room he wrote, he gave instructions to his brother-monks and disciples, he received his friends, he sometimes had his meals, he slept, he meditated and communed with God. And here, also, he passed from his mortal form in the final meditation of his life. Now the room is regarded as most sacred; every thing in it is kept in the very same order as it was on the last day of his life. The calendar on the wall reads "July 4, 1902." The writing-table appears as though he had just risen from it to go perhaps to the chapel near by. On the rack still hang his Geruâ robes. Only on the walls and upon the couch and the beds the pictures of the Swami have been placed, and a life-size oil-painting of Sri Ramakrishna has also been added in a prominent place on the wall. The room is used for meditation. He who enters it bows down in reverence. And thousands upon thousands have come to visit it, for it speaks of the tenderness, greatness and power of him whose spirit has set their souls aflame.

The Swami loved the monastery and its surroundings. He loved his room. He was always glad to come back to it either from the West, or after his travels in India, or even after a short absence in Calcutta. In a letter dated December 19, 1900, he wrote to an American disciple :

"Verily, I am a bird of passage! Gay and busy Paris, grim old Constantinople, sparkling little Athens and Pyramidal Cairo are left behind, and here I am now, writing in my room in the Math on the Ganges. It is so quiet and still! The broad river is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo boat breaking the silence with the splashing of the oars. It is the cold season here. . . . Everything is green and gold. . . . and the air is cold and crisp and delightful."



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Aye, the Swami loved the monastery and its silence and peace. He loved his brother-monks, his disciples and the many friends and visitors who came to see the Math and to listen to his words. But sometimes he was in a strange mood, demanding solitude, when none dared to approach him, and he would remain alone for hours.

He was always frank and free, ruling not so much by authority as by the vigorous power of his personality and love. He would sing Kirtanas with his brother-monks, or pace the monastery grounds lost in contemplation. On festival days he would join as the Leader in their spiritual exercises, play on musical instruments with them, and sing with them in spiritual joy in his sweet and thrilling voice for hours. He was the Leader in all things, the *life-centre* of the monastery.

And he would often joke and make fun with his Gurubhais and tease them and make them laugh. At other times he would instruct them or help them in their difficulties, always manifesting the greatest tenderness. Though he might reprimand them, to others he always spoke of them with the greatest regard, for they were the sons of the Master and he was privileged to be the servant of them all. He was the irresistible magnet and they were as so many iron filings drawn towards him, often without understanding why, but always loving him.

He would rouse the monks from sleep in the early hours of the mornings. He himself was always an early riser. He would order them to see that the regulations were strictly observed and followed. Any infringement of the monastery rules would make him indignant. He would make them practise austerities, but he would see that they did not go too far. His love would not allow them to suffer. It was all

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excitement, activity, spiritual fervour and great training at the monastery.

The garden, the cooking, the care of the cows which the monastery kept, in fact, the very simplest things interested him. And to this day the monks recall how like a boy he would dispute with Swami Brahmananda with regard to the boundaries that separated the pasturefield for the cows from the latter's vegetable and flower gardens, and the alleged trespassing from one side or the other! Sometimes he would experiment on bread-making, trying all sorts of yeast, undaunted by repeated failures. He attributed the unhealthy climate of the Math to the want of pure water for drinking and cooking purposes, the river water being too dirty, especially during the rains. In order to have a supply of pure water all the year round, he attempted with the help of his fellow-monks to sink an artesian well, for which he had bought the necessary appliances. At other times, dressed in his Geruâ Alkhalla and Sâdhu's cap and carrying a thick stick, he would call a number of his Gurubhais and disciples to go out for a walk with him, and would be as gay as ever at such times.

After coming back from East Bengal the Swami gave up all public work and devoted himself to a number of pets collected from various sources, including Bâghâ the Math dog, a she-goat which he playfully called "Hansi," or "Swan," several cows, sheep, ducks, geese, an antelope, a stork, and a kid which he named "Mâtru" and on the neck of which he placed a string of tiny jingling bells. Wherever he went the kid accompanied him. And those who came to the Math in great reverence to see the man who had captured the Parliament of Religions and vindicated spirituality to the East and

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the West, were overcome with a wonderful love for his sweet human personality when they found him playing and running hither and thither to amuse his favourite kid. When it died he grieved like a child, and told his disciple Sarat Chandra, "How strange! Whomsoever I love dies early!" He himself would see that the animals were properly fed and their places kept clean and dry, and in this Swami Sadananda was his chief helper. These animals loved the Swami exceedingly, and he would talk to them as though they were actually human. And once he said playfully that Matru was really a relation of his in a former existence; the kid had access to his room and used to sleep on a couch there as though it had every right to do so. Sometimes the Swami would go to "Hansi" and beg her for milk for his tea, as though she could refuse or give as she chose. In a letter to an American lady disciple, dated September 7, 1901, he writes referring to his pets:

"The rains have come down now in right earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring, pouring, night and day. The river is rising, flooding the banks; the ponds and tanks have overflowed. I have just now returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water from the Math grounds. The rain-water stands at places several feet deep. My huge stork is full of glee and so are the ducks and geese. My tame antelope fled from the Math and gave us some days of anxiety in finding him out. One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday. She had been gasping for breath more than a week. One of my waggish old monks says, 'Sir, it is no use living in the Kali Yuga when ducks catch cold from damp and rain and frogs sneeze.' One of the geese was losing her feathers. Knowing no other method of treatment, I left her some minutes in a tub of water mixed with a mild carbolic, so that it might either kill or heal,—and she is all right now."

In one sense Bagha was the master of the group of animals at the Math; he felt that the monastery was his by right. Once he was taken across the

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Ganges for some gross misconduct, and left there. But he jumped on the ferry-boat that evening, glaring and growling so savagely at the boatman and the passengers when they tried to dislodge him, that they did not dare dispute his right to remain, and the next morning the Swami, going to his bath-room at about four o'clock as usual, stumbled upon him as he lay at his door. The Swami patted him on the back and assured him of protection. Later he told the monks that whatever Bagha might do, he should never be sent away again. The animal seemed to know that it was to the Swami he must go for forgiveness, and that if he permitted him to stay, he would not be sent away whatever others might say or do.

There are many strange stories current in the Math about Bagha. For instance: As soon as the gongs and conchshells proclaimed the beginning or the end of an eclipse, he in common with hundreds of devout men and women would take a dip in the Ganges of his own accord! Long after the Swami's passing away when Bagha died, the body was thrown in a remote part of the Math grounds on the bank of the Ganges, and was carried away by the high tide, only to be washed back there. Whereupon a Brahmachârin asked permission of the elders, which was granted, to inter the body in the Math grounds, and a pile of bricks still marks the spot.

Here in the monastery the Swami was free from the monotony of society, and its tiresome conventionalities. He was free to walk about barefooted or with plain slippers on, Hookah or staff in hand. Here he was free of the coat, vest, trousers and particularly the collar (which had always fretted him) of his Western experience. With a Kaupina or piece of Geruâ cloth he could live in a world of his own, in monastic silence and seclusion, his own element.

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When the monks sat down to meals, the beloved Leader often joined them, bringing and sharing with them some of the dainties which his rich disciples had sent for him. And there was light-hearted talk at these meals and the Swami was always in the lead. Truly, they were all happy sons of the Master. The austerities they practised, the religious study and meditation in which they passed their days, their conversations, their purity of character,—all these were imbued with the Spirit of the Great Illumination of the Man of Dakshineswar, in which their Leader had shared, and the nature of which was Absolute Freedom and Immortal Bliss.

As the days passed and that final event of his life, the Mahâsamâdhi, drew nearer the Swami revealed himself more and more as the monk.

His illness was on the increase, and was causing great anxiety. He suffered much from general dropsy. His feet especially were swollen, making it difficult for him to walk. Those who served him say that his body became so sensitive that anything but the slightest touch caused him acute pain. Sleep almost deserted him in the last year of his life. But he was always resigned to the will of the Lord, and in spite of his illness was ever cheerful and ready to receive friends and visitors and talk with them with his characteristic fire and eloquence, though sometimes in a somewhat subdued tone. His disciple Sarat Chandra, who came to see him at this time enquired about his health. The Swami softly replied: "Why ask any more about health, my boy? Every day the body is getting more and more out of order. Born in Bengal, never has this body been free from disease. This province is not at all good for the physique. As soon as you begin to work hard the body, unable to bear the strain, breaks down. The

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few days more that it lasts, I shall continue to work for you all, and die in harness."

When urged to take rest for some months he said: "My son, there is no rest for me. That which Sri Ramakrishna called 'Kali,' took possession of my body and soul three or four days before his passing away. *That* makes me work and work, and never lets me keep still or look to my personal comfort." On request he told of that great event of his life in these words:

"Three or four days before the Master's passing, he called me to his side when alone, and making me sit before him gazed intently into my eyes and entered into Samâdhi. I then actually perceived a powerful current of subtle force like electricity entering into me from his body. After a time I too lost all outward consciousness and was merged in Samâdhi. How long I was in that state I cannot say. When I came down to the sense-plane, I found the Master crying. On being asked he said with great tenderness, 'O my Naren! I have now become a Fakir by giving away my all and everything to you! By the force of this Sakti, you will do many great things in this world, and only after that will you go back!' It seems to me that it is that *Power* which makes me work and work, whirling me, as it were, into its vortex. This body is not made for sitting idle."

Throughout July and August of the year 1901 the Swami took as much rest as he could, and as its result, in September he was somewhat better.

After the establishment of the permanent home of the Order at Belur, the bigoted and orthodox people of the neighbouring villages who were ignorant of their Sâstras, used to pass biting criticisms about the Swami and the monks for their novel ideas, their liberal ways of living and modes of work, and

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especially for their non-observance of the restrictions of caste, custom and food. They even invented lies about them and cast malicious aspersions and doubts as to their purity of character. These calumnies were made by them particularly on the boats plying between Calcutta and Bally, when they found passengers going to or coming from the Math. When the Swami heard about them, he merely observed: "You know the old proverb, 'The elephant goes through the Bazaar and hundreds of dogs follow barking after him.' The Sâdhu is never affected if the world abuses him." Or: "It is a law of nature that whensoever new ideas are preached in any country, the adherents of the old rise against them. Every founder of religion has had to pass this test. Without persecution higher ideas cannot enter the core of society." Hence he regarded opposition and adverse criticism as actual helps to the spreading of his ideas, and he neither defended himself nor allowed any one of his followers or friends to do so. He exhorted them: "Go on doing your work disinterestedly and without attachment; it will surely some time bear fruit." Or "The doer of good never meets with disaster," he would say. This criticism of his work gradually died out even before the passing of the Swami, the performance of the Durgâ Pujâ in the Math in strict orthodox style contributing a good deal towards that end.

It must be remembered that if the Swami preached liberal ideas in social matters, he was at the same time most orthodox in religious matters. In the latter part of the year 1901, he observed all the religious festivals. Several months before the Durgâ Pujâ in 1901 which occurred that year in October, he had secured from his disciple Sarat Chandra a copy of Raghunandan's 'Twenty-eight Tattvas,' otherwise called 'Raghunandan's Smriti,' which he consulted in

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order to perform the Durgâ Pujâ that year in strict conformity with its injunctions. He did not mention his desire to anyone at the Math until ten or twelve days before the festival. About this time one of his Gurubhaiś dreamt that the ten-armed Mother was coming across the Ganges towards the Math from the direction of Dakshineswar. On the following day the Swami spoke of his intention, whereupon the Gurubhai told him of his dream. This settled the question, and the Swami with the Swami Premananda went to Calcutta to ask the permission of the Holy Mother about certain observances in connection with the Pujâ. The Holy Mother approved and the Swami at once gave orders for an image to be made, and then returned to the Math. The news spread rapidly all over the city and the householder disciples gladly joined with the Sannyâsins in making the celebration a success.

On the northern part of the lawn where Sri Ramakrishna's birthday festival is held, a temporary shed was constructed for the installation and worship of the Mother.

Under the able management of Swami Brahmananda, the Math was furnished with all sorts of Pujâ requisites and abundant foodstuffs for feasts. The garden-house of Babu Nilambar Mukherjee near by was rented for a month for the accommodation of the Holy Mother who came to live there with several women-devotees the day previous to the Pujâ, so that she could be present throughout the entire festival.

Ishwar Chandra Bhattacharya, father of Swami Ramakrishnananda, a devout Brâhmana, well versed in the Tantras and Mantras, became the Tantradhâraka, that is, director of the worship of the Goddess in strict accordance with Sâstric injunctions.



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To feed the poor sumptuously was the chief function in connection with this Pujâ, and hundreds came throughout the three days of the ceremony and were lavishly served with Prasâd. Special invitations were sent to some of the Brâhmanas and Pandits of Belur and Dakshineswar to join in the Pujâ. After this celebration the orthodox members of the community lost their animosity and were convinced that the monks were truly Hindu Sannyâsins.

On the night of the Saptami, the first day of the Pujâ proper, the Swami had an attack of fever, which prevented him from joining in it the next morning. But he rose from his bed and slowly came down to attend the Sandhipujâ, the most important and solemn function of the whole Pujâ, and made three offerings of flowers etc., at the feet of the Mother. On the next day, the Navami, he was well, and at night sang a few of those songs to the Mother which Sri Ramakrishna used to sing on such occasions.

On the Vijaya Dasami day, the image was consigned to the Ganges at nightfall, and the Holy Mother who was highly pleased at the way in which the Pujâ was celebrated, returned to her residence at Baghbazar after blessing the Sannyâsins.

The Durga Pujâ in the image is the national festival of Bengal corresponding to the Christmas of Christian lands. It is the one annual event to which every Hindu looks forward with great joy, as the Mother is believed then to come down from Her icy abode in Mount Kailas with Her consort Siva and Her household of Immortals, to live three days with Her mortal children and bestow Her blessings on them. The balmy autumn air, the green fields and meadows with the paddies waving their laden heads, the shining rivers and the bedewed trees,—all these seem to all Hindus to herald the coming of

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the Mother amongst them. Presents are exchanged among friends and relations, boys and girls are given new clothes. Food and clothes are distributed to the poor and to the servants of households, and hundreds of invitations are issued to friends and acquaintances to join in the Pujâ. The houses in which the Pujâ is celebrated are decorated; and for many days previous, songs to the Mother are sung in joyous anticipation of Her coming, or in sending out a welcome to Her. And Her beautifully decorated image, represented with one foot on the lion and the other on the shoulder of the demon Mahishâsura, in a death struggle with Her, and surrounded by Her celestial sons and daughters—Kartick, the warrior-god, Ganes, the giver of success, Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune and Saraswati, the goddess of learning,—is an actual living Presence to Her devout worshippers. One has to live in a Hindu household where the Pujâ is celebrated, in order to understand how great is the Hindu's faith in Her as the destroyer of distress and difficulty. And the Vijaya Dasami day in Bengal is the day of universal rejoicing, of exchange of greetings and salutations, of goodwill and fellow-feeling, when the high and the low, forgetting their differences of social position and caste, and even enemies forgetting their animosities, clasp each other in warm embrace.

That same year the Swami also performed the Lakshmi Pujâ and the Kâli Pujâ in images, both being celebrated in the monastery in strict accordance with Sâstric rites. After the Kâli Pujâ his mother sent him word that when he was a child he was once seriously ill, and that on that occasion she had taken a vow to offer special worship to Mother Kâli and literally make him roll on the ground before Her, in case he should recover. She had forgotten

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all about it all these years, but his recurring illness now recalled to her mind this long-forgotten vow. Though the Swami was ill at that time he went to the Kalighat temple in order to please his mother. He bathed in the Ganges and in obedience to her wishes came all the way to the temple in his wet clothes and rolled thrice on the ground before the Mother. After offering worship he walked round the temple seven times and then, in the open compound on the western side of the Nâtmandir, he himself performed Homa before the Mother. Returning from Kalighat, the Swami spoke of the liberal spirit of the temple-priests. Though they knew that he had crossed the seas,—an act most unorthodox in their eyes,—they raised no objection. “On the other hand,” he said, “they welcomed me warmly into the temple and helped me to worship the Mother in any way I liked.”

The Swami by worshipping images has shown that even this form of worship of the Divine is not wrong. An out and out Advaitin, he, like the great Sankaracharya, had great devotion for these personal aspects of Godhead. As the sun in the evening sky, touched by clouds of various shapes, displays an infinite variety of fascinating colours, so the illumined soul of Vivekananda, like that of his Master, swayed by different religious feelings, revealed to others a wonderful variety of forms of God-vision. But in that variety they saw the play of the One Infinite only—a state of realisation beyond all intellectual understanding.

## XXXIX

### TOWARDS THE END

In October 1901 the Swami's condition again became serious, and Dr. Saunders, a noted physician of Calcutta, was called in. The Swami was ordered to abandon even the slightest exertion and to give up all intellectual work. Not long after the doctor's visit he was confined to his bed,—a fact which distressed him as he was eager to be up and doing. From this time onwards the monks cautioned one another and all the visitors that came, to abstain from any serious conversation with him; and if in his talks the Swami drifted to any serious subject, they would object. Whenever he felt better, he busied himself with some manual work or other. Sometimes he would hoe the grounds of the Math, sometimes he would plant fruit-trees and flower plants, or sow vegetable seeds, and watch their growth with boyish interest.

In these days an incident occurred which exhibited the marvellous faith and Yoga power of the Swami. His disciple, Swami Nirbhayananda, was in delirium from high fever, and all hope of his recovery was abandoned. The fever rose to 107 degrees. The Swami was very anxious. Finally, seized by a sudden intuition, he went to the shrine of the monastery to worship Sri Ramakrishna and after washing the casket containing the relics of Sri Ramakrishna, he brought the sacred water to the sick monk to drink. The fever abated suddenly. The Swami, turning to his Gurubhais and disciples, said with great joy, "Behold the power of Sri Ramakrishna ! What wonders can he not work !"

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A spiritual experience of a very striking character which the Swami had, and which made a profound impression on all those who came to know of it, was the fulfilment of a test in regard to the actual Presence of Sri Ramakrishna in the monastery chapel. It occurred shortly after his return from his last visit to the West. The reliquary of the Master is regarded by his devotees as his Living Presence. The Swami sometimes called it "Atmârâma's Kauta." One day doubt entered his mind and he asked himself, "Does Sri Ramakrishna really reside here? I must test it!" Then he prayed, "My Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, if thou art really present here, then bring hither within three days the Maharaja of Gwalior who has come to Calcutta on a short visit!" He knew that the chance of the Prince's coming was very remote. He mentioned his prayer to none and indeed, later on, forgot all about it. The next day, returning in the evening from Calcutta where he had gone for a few hours on some business, he learned that the Maharaja of Gwalior was actually prepared to call on him. He had deputed his brother to see if the Swami was at the Math, and in case of his not being there to leave word that he wished very much to see the Swami, but as he was leaving Calcutta the next day, he would reserve the pleasure of seeing him for some other occasion. As soon as the Swami heard this news, he remembered his test, and literally running up the stairs to the shrine, bowed his head repeatedly before the altar containing the sacred casket. Swami Premananda who was at that time meditating there, was bewildered. Then the Swami narrated to him and to the assembled monks, all about the test and all marvelled at this proof of the Presence of the Lord in the chapel.

If the Swami had critics he had also staunch

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friends and admirers among the most representative of his countrymen. During the session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Calcutta that year in the latter part of December, scores of distinguished delegates from different provinces availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the monastery and pay their homage to Swami Vivekananda whom they regarded as the Patriot-Saint of Modern India. He often spoke with them in Hindi instead of in English, and invariably made a great impression on them.

Among the ideas which he discussed with the leaders of the Congress was the founding of a Vedic Institution to train teachers and preserve the ancient Aryan culture and Sanskrit learning. The delegates were in fervent sympathy with this plan.

This desire to found a Vedic college was cherished by the Swami to the very end, and even on the last day of his life, he was seen speaking to a Gurubhai on the need of Vedic study. In order to secure funds to commence this work early on a small scale, he instructed Swami Trigunatita to dispose of the Udbodhan Press. This, however, did not take a practical shape as the Swami passed away before he could do anything in this direction.

Towards the end of the year two learned and influential men from Japan visited the Math. They had come especially to interview the Swami in order to induce him to appear before a Congress of Religions that was being contemplated at the time in Japan. They said: "If such a distinguished person as you take part in the Congress, it will be a success. You must come and help us. Japan stands in need of a religious awakening, and we do not know of anyone else who can bring about this much-desired consummation." The speaker was the Rev. Oda,

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the abbot of a Buddhist monastery in Japan. The Swami seeing his marked sincerity, as well as that of his companion, Mr. Okakura, became enthusiastic, and consented. Though his health was very bad at the time, he did not mind it, so long as he could be of service to humanity. With them he talked on the glorious life of the Lord Buddha, and the philosophical side of his teachings, with such fervour, devotion and insight that they simply marvelled. There was a boy named Hari who had accompanied the elders to India. Mr. Okakura and Hari were made comfortable as the guests of the monastery. They loved the Swami dearly, who moved with them freely and joined the boy in his boyish hobbies. Later the news of the death of Hari while travelling in India, deeply affected the Swami. Mr. Okakura requested the Swami to accompany him to Buddha Gaya; and as the Swami desired to visit Benares and had already made arrangements for his stay there at Gopal Lal Villa, he accepted the invitation of his Japanese friend, saying, "It would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you to the place where the Tathâgata attained Nirvâna, and after that to go on a pilgrimage to Benares where the Buddha first preached his Gospel unto man. Besides, Benares has for me a special attraction!"

Reflecting on this visit, Sister Nivedita has written:

"When the winter again set in, he (the Swami) was so ill as to be confined to bed.

"Yet he made one more journey, lasting through January and February 1902, when he went first to Buddha Gaya and next to Benares. It was a fit ending to all his wanderings. He arrived at Buddha Gaya on the morning of his last birthday, and nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and hospitality of the Mahunta. Here, as afterwards at Benares, the confidence and affection of the orthodox world were brought to him in

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such measure and freedom that he himself stood amazed at the extent of his empire in men's hearts. Buddha Gaya, as it was now the last, had also been the first, of the holy places he had set out to visit. And it had been in Benares some few years back, (when he was an unknown monk,) that he had said farewell to one, with the words, 'Till that day when I fall on society like a thunderbolt I shall visit this place no more!' "

From Buddha Gaya the Swami went on to Benares where he hoped the dry climate would improve his health. Mr. Okakura parted from him there, after getting his promise that he would soon let him know definitely when he would sail for Japan.

In Benares he was again the centre of attraction for numerous persons. The Mahuntas and orthodox Pandits who came to see him, became his great admirers, in spite of his sweeping ideas in the re-statement and reform of Hindu culture, and the fact that he had crossed the seas. He met here the Maharaja of Bhinga, who begged him to establish a monastery of the Order in the Holy City, offering him a certain sum of money for its maintenance for one year and assuring him of his further support. The Swami promised that he would do so, and on his return to Calcutta sent Swami Sivananda with a disciple to open an Ashrama there. Many times he went on an afternoon trip on the Ganges, and on a few occasions, when his health permitted, he bathed in its waters, and then, as a common pilgrim, visited the holy temples, particularly that of Visvanath. He kept himself in touch also with affairs in Calcutta and his other Indian centres. One of his letters indicative of his true historical and archæological spirit, shows that he was bestowing much thought at the time on Buddhism. It reads:

" My dear Swarupananda,

" . . . In answer to C—'s letter, tell him to study the



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Brahma Sutras himself. What does he mean by the Brahma Sutras containing references to Buddhism? He means the Bhâshyas (commentaries), of course, or rather ought to mean, and Sankara was only the last Bhâshyakâra (commentator). There are references though in Buddhistic literature to Vedânta, and the Mahâyâna school of Buddhism is even non-Advaitistic. Why does Amara Singha, a Buddhist, give as one of the names of Buddha 'Advayavadi'? C— writes, the word Brahman does not occur in the Upanishads! *Quel betise!*

"I hold the Mahâyâna to be the older of the two schools of Buddhism.

"The theory of Mâyâ is as old as the Rik Samhitâ. The Svetâsvatara Upanishad contains the word 'Mâyâ' which is developed out of Prakriti. I hold that Upanishad to be at least older than Buddhism.

"I have had much light of late about Buddhism, and I am ready to prove that—(1) Siva-worship, in various forms, antedated the Buddhists, that the Buddhists tried to get hold of the sacred places of the Saivas, but failing in that, made new places in the precincts, just as you find now at Buddha Gaya and Sarnath (Benares).

"(2) The story in the Agni Purâna about Gayâsura does not refer to Buddha at all—as Dr. Rajendralala will have it,—but simply to a pre-existing story.

"(3) That Buddha went to live on Gayâsirsha mountain proves the pre-existence of that place.

"(4) Gaya was a place of ancestor-worship already, and the footprint-worship the Buddhists copied from the Hindus.

"(5) About Benares, even the oldest records go to prove it as the great place of Siva-worship, etc., etc.

"Many are the new facts I have gathered in Buddha Gaya and from Buddhist literature. Tell C—to read for himself, and not be swayed by foolish opinions. . . .

"A total revolution has occurred in my mind about the relation of Buddhism and Neo-Hinduism. I may not live to work out the glimpses, but I shall leave the lines of work indicated, and you and your brethren will have to work it out."

Under the inspiration of the Swami's teachings, several Bengali youths at Benares had formed themselves into a band to be of service to thousands of suffering pilgrims in that sacred city. They rented a small house and endeavoured with their limited means

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to provide proper food, shelter and medical aid to destitute pilgrims, helpless widows and aged persons lying ill in the streets and Ghats of the city. They worked with a zeal and a spirit of self-sacrifice, which recalled the days of St. Francis of Assisi. The Swami was delighted with the work they were doing and was proud of them. "You have the true spirit, my boys," he said, "and you have always my love and blessings! Go on bravely; never mind your poverty; money will come; a great thing will grow out of it surpassing your fondest hopes!" For their sake he wrote an appeal which was to accompany the first report of "The Ramakrishna Home of Service" as this new institution was called.

The Swami's stay in Benares was a very pleasant one. The dry climate relieved him of his asthmatic attacks; and amidst the temples and Sâdhus of the sacred city he felt himself to be dwelling in the Spirit. In his letters to Western disciples written from Benares he speaks of its shrines, its Ghats and its holiness. And those to whom these letters were written, were exceedingly glad to know that the Swami was somewhat better. He, however, returned to the Monastery at Belur shortly.

There were times, however, when the Swami, finding his body becoming more and more incapable of work, would become despondent, because only a few workers had come forward to help him. His hopes were centred in gathering together a number of intelligent young men who would renounce everything for the welfare of others, and who would lay down their lives in working out his ideas for their own good and for that of their country. He used to say that if he could get ten or twelve youths fired with a faith like that of Nachiketa, he could turn the whole current of thought and aspiration of his country into a new channel.

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Speaking of this one day to Sarat Chandra, he suddenly exclaimed: "Keeping before you the national ideal of renunciation which comes out of devotion to the Lord, you have to work fearlessly with the strength of a lion, heedless of the fruits of action and without caring for criticism. Let Mahâvir be your ideal. See how with unbounded faith in the name of Rama he—the prince of the self-controlled ones, wise and sagacious—crossed the ocean in one bound, defying death! You have to mould your lives after that high ideal,—thinking yourselves the servants of the Lord." He condemned all weakening ideals in all departments of life including religion, and advocated in all spheres of activity, the expression of the loftiness of spirit which heroism breathes. "Only by following such an ideal of manliness can we ensure the welfare of our motherland. . . . But, mind you, never for a moment swerve an inch from the path of righteousness. Never let weakness overcome you."

Speaking in this strain the Swami came downstairs and sat on the canvas cot under the mango tree in the courtyard, facing the west, as he often used to do. His eyes were luminous; his whole frame seemed alive with some strange spiritual consciousness. Pointing to the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins about him, he exclaimed, "And where will you go to seek Brahman? He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman! Shame on those who disregarding the visible Brahman set their minds on other things! Here is the Brahman before you as tangible as a fruit in one's hand! Can't you see! Here—here—here is the Brahman!" He spoke these words in such an inspiring way that over all present there came the peace and insight of deep meditation. They stood like marble statues, so motionless and

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hushed in silence had they become! Swami Premananda after his bath in the Ganges was on his way to the chapel for worship. Hearing the words of his Gurubhai he fell into a trance and became motionless. After quarter of an hour the Swami said to him, "Now go for worship." Then only did the Swami Premananda regain his normal consciousness.

That scene was unforgettable. Everyone in the monastery was struck with amazement at the wonderful power of the beloved Leader who with but one word could raise the minds of all to the heights of Supreme Insight.

About this time, the latter part of the year 1901, a number of Santal labourers used to work in the Math grounds. The Swami would be talking with them and listening to their tales of woe. He found it a great relaxation from his work and tense state of mind. One day some gentlemen of wealth and position came to see him while he was talking with these poor labourers. When he was told of the arrival of the visitors, he said, "I shan't be able to go now. I am quite happy with these people!"

The Swami was especially fond of one of the Santals, Keshta by name. This man used to say, "O Swami, don't come to us when we are working, for we cannot work while we talk to you, and the supervising Swami takes us to task for not doing our full measure of work!" At these words the Swami was visibly affected, and assured them that Swami Advaitananda would not scold them. Sometimes the tale of their wants and miseries would move him to tears, when Keshta would say, "Now you must go, Swami! We won't tell you any more of our troubles, for it makes you weep!"

One day the Swami asked Keshta: "Would you all like to have a feast here?" The man replied,

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"Dear father, if we eat food cooked by you with salt we shall lose our caste!" On the Swami's insisting and finally saying that salt would not be mixed in the cooking but would be served to them separately, Keshta agreed. The menu included Puris, sweets, curd and a number of other delicacies. The Swami himself supervised the arrangements and the serving of food to his guests, who exclaimed from time to time, "O Swami, where did you get such fine things! We have never tasted such dishes before." When the meal was over, the Swami told them: "You are Narayanas; today I have entertained the Lord Himself by feeding you!" Later, to a disciple he remarked, "I actually saw the Lord Himself in them! How simple-hearted and guileless they are! Shortly after, to the Sannyâsins and the Brahmachârins of the Math he said:

"See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Can you mitigate their misery a little? If not, of what use is your wearing the Geruâ? Sacrificing everything for the good of others—this is true Sannyâsa. Sometimes I think within myself, 'What is the good of building monasteries and so forth! Why not sell them and distribute the money among the poor. What should we care for homes, we who have made the tree our shelter? Alas! How can we have the heart to put a morsel to our mouths, when our countrymen have not enough wherewith to feed or clothe themselves!' Let us, throwing away all pride of learning and study of the Sâstras and all Sâdhanâs for the attainment of personal Mukti, go from village to village devoting our lives to the service of the poor. Let us through the force of our character and spirituality and our austere living convince the rich man of his duty to the masses and induce him to give money for the service of the poor and the distressed.

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Alas! Nobody in our country thinks of the low, the poor and the miserable! These are the backbone of the nation, whose labour produces our food. Where is the man in our country who sympathises with them, who shares in their joys and sorrows! Look, how for want of sympathy on the part of the Hindus, thousands of Pariahs in the Madras Presidency are becoming Christians! Don't think that it is merely the pinch of hunger that drives them to embrace Christianity. It is simply because they do not get your sympathy. Is there any fellow-feeling or sense of Dharma left in the country? There is only 'Don't-touchism' now! Kick out all such degrading usages! How I wish to demolish the barriers of 'Don't-touchism' and go out and bring together one and all, calling out, 'Come all ye that are poor and destitute, fallen and downtrodden! We are one in the name of Ramakrishna!' Unless they are raised, this motherland of ours will never awake! What are we good for if we cannot provide them with food and clothing! Alas! They are ignorant of the ways of the world, and hence fail to eke out a living, though they labour hard day and night for it. Gather all your forces together to remove the veil from their eyes. I see as clear as daylight that the same Brahman, the same Sakti that is in me is in them as well! Only, there is a difference in the degree of manifestation—that is all. In the whole history of the world have you ever seen a country rise without a free circulation of the national blood throughout its entire body? If one limb is paralysed, then even with the other limbs whole, not much can be done with that body—know this for certain."

A lay disciple said to the Swami, "It is too difficult a task, sir, to establish harmony and co-operation among all the varying religious sects and

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creeds that are current in this country, and to make them act in unison for a common purpose." Vexed at these words, the Swami said:

"Don't come here any more if you think any task too difficult. Through the grace of the Lord, everything becomes easy of achievement. Your duty is to serve the poor and the distressed, without distinction of caste and creed. What business have you to think of the fruits of your action? Your duty is to go on working and everything will follow of itself. My method of work is to construct, and not to destroy that which is already existing. Read the histories of the world and you will see that invariably, in every country, at some particular epoch, some great man has stood as the centre of its national life, influencing the people by his ideas. You are all intelligent boys, and profess to be my disciples,—tell me what you have done. Can't you give away one life for the sake of others? Let the reading of the Vedânta and the practising of meditation and the like be left for the next life! Let this body go in the service of others,—and then I shall know that your coming to me has not been in vain."

Later on, he said: "After so much Tapasyâ I have understood this as the highest truth: 'God is present in every being. There is no other God besides that. He who serves all beings serves God indeed!'"

The two above-mentioned incidents were typical of the many noteworthy occasions when the Swami, in spite of his illness and sufferings, rose to heights of amazing power, feeling and eloquence in giving his message to his disciples and countrymen, from the enforced seclusion of his monastery. No wonder that he would feel a reaction! But who could check that mighty flame within him, which must either burst

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out and set the souls of others on fire, or consume his whole being !

On the occasion of the birthday festival of Sri Ramakrishna, shortly after his return from Benares, the Swami was unable to leave his room. In fact, for some days previous he had been confined to his bed. His feet were swollen and he was almost unable to walk. A gloom was cast over the celebration by the announcement that his malady had taken a serious turn. The disappointment of the thousands who had come on this festive occasion was great, for they had anticipated the pleasure of seeing him and hearing his words; and for their sake the Swami thought several times in the morning of appearing in public. But he soon found that even the few visitors who had come to him in the early part of the day had tired him. So he decided to rest and ordered Swami Niranjanananda to keep guard and permit none to enter his room. The Gurubhai did as he was bidden. Only one lay disciple attended on the Swami. Seeing the Swami's state of health, the disciple was deeply affected. The Swami understanding his feelings said: "What is the use of giving way to sorrow, my boy? This body was born and it will die. If I have been able to instil into you all, even to a small degree, some of my ideas, then I shall know that I have not lived my life in vain ! Always remember that renunciation is the root idea. Unless initiated into this idea, not even Brahmâ and the World-Gods have the power to attain Mukti."

He then became deeply absorbed in thought. After a while he observed: "I think that it will be better if from now the anniversary is celebrated in a different way. The celebration should extend to four or five days instead of one. On the first day, there may be study and interpretation of the scrip-



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tures; on the second, discussion on the Vedas and the Vedânta, and solution of the problems in connection with them; on the third day, there may be a question class; the fourth day may be fixed for lectures; and on the last day there will be a festival on the present lines."

When the Sankirtan parties arrived, he stood by the window on the southern side, supporting himself against its iron bars, and gazed lovingly on the assembled thousands. After a few minutes he was constrained to sit down again, as he was too weak to stand. He then spoke to the disciple on the realisation of the Self which comes out of devotion to the Lord who is born as a world-teacher from time to time. He also talked of the glory of the Avatâras or Incarnations of God, who alone can give Mukti to millions of souls even in one life by dispelling their ignorance.

He gave a beautiful explanation of what is meant by grace. He said: "He who has realised the Atman becomes a store-house of great power. From him as the centre and within a certain radius emanates a spiritual force, and all those who come within this circle become animated with his ideas and are overwhelmed by them. Thus without much religious striving they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. This is grace."

"Blessed are those," he continued, "who have seen Sri Ramakrishna. All of you also will get his vision. When you have come here, you are very near to him. Nobody has been able to understand who came on earth as Sri Ramakrishna. Even his own nearest devotees have got no real clue to it. Only some have got a little inkling of it. All will understand it in time."

Off and on during the last year and a half of his

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life the Swami was under strict medical orders. When he returned from Benares to be present at the festival of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday anniversary at the Belur Math, and to take up again, as he had hoped, his work of personal training and teaching, his health suffered a serious relapse. His Gurubhais became nervous over his condition. At the earnest entreaty of Swami Niranjanananda, in which all his other Gurubhais joined, he agreed to place himself under the treatment of an Ayurvedic practitioner, the well-known Kaviraj Mahananda Sen Gupta of Calcutta. The treatment was most rigorous; he was not allowed to drink water or take any salt. These instructions the Swami adhered to faithfully. Firstly, because he loved to feel the response of the body to the will, to realise his own command over it; secondly, because he felt that he must abide by the wishes of his Gurubhais; and lastly, for the sake of the work that was constantly opening up before him, he thought he should give a trial to any course of treatment to regain his health, though he was not himself very hopeful. To one he said in loving humility, "You see, I am simply obeying the orders of my Gurubhais. I could not disregard their request; they love me so dearly!" To a disciple who asked him, "Swamiji, how is it that in spite of the severe heat of the summer you can refrain from drinking water, when you were in the habit of drinking it hourly throughout the day?" he replied, "When I decided to begin the treatment, I imposed this vow upon myself, and now the water would not go down my throat. For twenty-one days I have refrained from water, and now in rinsing out my mouth I find that the muscles of my throat close of their own accord against the passage of a single drop. The body is only a servant of the mind. What the mind dictates the body will

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have to obey." After a few days of Ayurvedic treatment, he was able to say to his Gurubhais, "Now I do not even think of water. I do not miss it at all!" He was overjoyed to find that in spite of physical weakness and broken health, his strength of will remained. After more than two months' use of the Ayurvedic medicines he felt greatly benefited.

In spite of the severe restrictions of the treatment, a very spare diet and very little sleep, the natural glow of his countenance and the lustre of his eyes were undiminished, and he knew no respite from his labours. Shortly before beginning the treatment he had begun reading the newly published edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. His disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, seeing one day those twenty-five large volumes remarked, "It is difficult to master the contents of so many volumes in one life." He did not know at the time that the Swami had already finished ten volumes and was reading the eleventh. "What do you mean?" said the Swami. "Ask me whatever you like from these ten volumes and I can tell you all about it." The disciple, out of curiosity, brought down the books and asked him many questions on difficult subjects, selecting one or two from every volume. Not only did the Swami answer the questions displaying a vast amount of even technical knowledge, but in many instances he quoted the very language of the books! The disciple was astounded at the extraordinary intelligence and memory of his Guru, and exclaimed, "This is beyond the power of man!" The Swami then told him that there was nothing miraculous about the matter, and that if one could only observe the strictest Brahmacharya, one could retain and reproduce exactly what one had heard or read but once, even if it were years ago. "For the lack of this Brahma-

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charya," he added, "we as a nation are becoming poorer and poorer in strength and intellect, and are losing our manhood."

After a while the Swami went on to explain to the disciple in the most lucid and convincing way the arguments advanced and conclusions arrived at by the different systems of Hindu philosophy. When the talk was going on, Swami Brahmananda came in and said to the disciple, "How inconsiderate you are! Swamiji is unwell, and you, instead of humouring him with light talk, as I told you to do, are tiring him out by making him speak on these abstruse subjects!" The disciple was abashed. But the Swami said to the Gurubhai, "Who cares for your medical restrictions and all that stuff! They are my sons; if in giving them instruction my body wears out, who cares a straw for that!"

The conversation afterwards turned on the topic of the Bengali poets. The Swami was very severe on Bhârat Chandra, one of the older Bengali poets, and praised Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *Meghanâdavadha Kāvya* as the greatest work of poetic genius in the Bengali literature, adding that it was difficult to find another epic poem even in the whole of Europe in modern times to match with it. "And do you know," he said in conclusion, "what portion of it I regard as the greatest creation of the poet? It is the scene in which Indrajit has been slain in battle, and Mandodari, the queen of King Râvana, stricken with sorrow at the loss of her valiant son, is imploring her husband to desist from battle; but Râvana, burning with pride, anger and revenge, like a great hero that he is, casting off from his heart all grief for his dead son, and without thought for the fate of his queen and other sons, is ready to go forth to battle. 'Come what may, let the universe remain or be broken up into fragments,

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I will not forget my duty !’—these are the words of a mighty hero !’” Then he asked the disciple to bring the book from the Math library and read aloud that portion in a thrilling manner.

Another morning, in talking with the same disciple, he raised the question of establishing his much-desired Math for women somewhere near Calcutta, on the banks of the Ganges, on the same lines as the one for men, with the Holy Mother as its central figure and guiding spirit, so that Brahmachârinis and women-teachers might be trained there to work for the regeneration of their sex in India. In a long, enthusiastic talk he spoke in detail of his ideas about the nunnery, the means and methods of its action, the urgent need of starting centres all over the country for the education of Indian women on national lines, and the great results that would come out of such work in time.

Throughout 1901 and even up to his passing away in 1902, the Swami was eager to receive friends and visitors and instruct his disciples, notwithstanding the request of his Gurubhais to take rest, for, in the matter of teaching, he set no limits. Everything must be sacrificed, even the body itself. Sometimes hearing of the plight of earnest seekers who were refused admission to his presence by the monks, he would be so deeply moved with pity that he would say: “Look here! What good is this body! Let it go in helping others. Did not the Master preach unto the very end? And shall I not do the same? I do not care a straw if the body goes! You cannot imagine how happy I am when I find earnest seekers after truth to talk to. In the work of waking up the Atman in my fellowmen I shall gladly die again and again !”

Especially from the early part of March 1902 until his passing away, the Swami was busy in many

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ways. He did not mind even his illness when he was bent upon doing something. Even to the last day he himself conducted numerous scriptural and question classes at the monastery, and oftentimes the Brahmachârlins and even his own Gurubhais came to him for spiritual advice. He would often explain the various methods of meditation, and train those who were backward in it. He spent hours in answering correspondence, or in reading, or making notes on Hindu philosophy or Indian history for publication; for recreation he would sing or discourse with his Gurubhais, giving himself up to fun and merriment. Oftentimes, in the midst of his talks his face would assume a dreamy far-away look, and then all would leave him, knowing that he wished to be left alone with his thoughts.

The Swami's eye saw everything that went on in the monastery, and he was very strict during these days in enforcing discipline. He insisted upon thorough cleanliness; when he found the floor covered with dust because of the servants' illness, he himself would sweep it, in order to teach the disciples the necessity of cleanliness, and would not surrender the broom to them. He would examine the beds and see that they were properly cared for and aired. If he found any carelessness in that respect, his reprimand was most severe. And once when Bagha, the Math dog, polluted the water brought for the Pujâ through the gross carelessness of one of the junior members, he was greatly vexed. He insisted that the classes on the Vedas and the Purânas should be held regularly. He allowed none of the members of the Order to rest after the noonday meal, making them commence at once the study of the Purânas.

The Swami abhorred extremes. He protested against the too elaborate paraphernalia of daily

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worship at the Math in the strongest terms and advised his disciples to devote more time to scriptural study, religious talks and discussions as well as to meditation, in order to mould their lives and understand the true spirit of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, and not waste their time over superfluous and minute details in conducting the worship. He felt that the Pujâ should be done in the simplest way with due devotion and fervour, and go hand in hand with meditation and study, and not be allowed to take up the whole time of the monks. In order to enforce this, he introduced the ringing of a bell at appointed hours when the monks had to leave whatever they might be doing to join the classes for study, discussion and meditation, and anyone failing to do so promptly was severely censured. Indeed, he was a loving and stern Guru, loved and feared at the same time by his disciples and Gurubhais. Throughout his stay at the Belur monastery, and especially during the last few months of his life, the Swami used to lay great stress on meditation. About three months before his death, he made a rule that at four o'clock in the morning a hand-bell should be rung from room to room to awaken the monks, and that within half an hour all should be gathered in the chapel to meditate. Over and above this, the Swami encouraged his disciples to practise austerities. Besides formulating a hard and fast daily routine for the monks, he had already written out, in the early part of the year 1898, a comprehensive set of rules and regulations, for the proper guidance of the monastic Order, wherein he had briefly set forth his principal ideas, methods and lines of work. This was to form the ideal of the Brotherhood, the carrying out of which in practice was to be the sole aim and endeavour of the monks. In his charge to the disciples he repeatedly pointed

out that no monastic order could keep itself pure and retain its original vigour or its power of working for good, without a definite ideal to reach, without rigorous discipline and vows, and without keeping up culture and education within its fold. He also pointed out that had it not been for the severe austerities and Sâdhanâs practised by himself and the Brotherhood, both during the lifetime of their Master and after his Mahâsamâdhi, and had it not been for his divine life which stood as an example and ideal before them, they could not have achieved what they had done.

Thus everyone was bound by routine as regards eating, resting, helping in worship and household duties, study and meditation. There were also rules which the visitors and the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had to observe whenever they were at the monastery, so that their visits might not interrupt the activities of the monks. For the welfare of the Order he had sometimes to be harsh and severe in enforcing the observance of the daily routine, even though he occasionally incurred displeasure thereby.

The Swami's joy was great when meditation and austerities were in full swing. He would say to his old friends and lay disciples, "See how the Sâdhus are practising devotion here. That is right! In the morning and evening, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say, the mind turns naturally, when trained, to the highest spiritual thoughts, and it is therefore easier to control and concentrate it at these junctures. One should therefore try to meditate then on God with undivided attention!" What he preached, he practised. Whenever his health permitted,—and fortunately he was comparatively well at this time,—he joined in the morning meditation in the chapel. He used to rise at 3 a.m. In a prominent part of the



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worship-room a special seat was spread for him, facing the north. He meditated there with the others. No one was allowed to leave his seat until the Swami had risen. Oftentimes his meditation would last for more than two hours. Then he would get up chanting, 'Siva! Siva!' and bowing to Sri Ramakrishna he would go downstairs and pace to and fro in the courtyard, singing a song to the Divine Mother or to Siva as he walked. His presence in the meditation-room invariably lent an added power and intensity to the meditations of those who sat with him. Swami Brahmananda once remarked, "Ah! One at once becomes absorbed if one sits for meditation in company with Naren! I do not feel this when I sit alone."

The days when the Swami could not join in the general meditation, he would make enquiries as to the attendance. Once, after an absence of many days, the Swami went into the worship-room at a time when the monks should have been meditating. It so happened that on that particular day many were absent! The Swami was vexed at this lapse, and at once coming down called them all before him. He demanded an explanation, and on receiving no satisfactory answer, passed orders that as a penalty none of them except those who had been present at the meditation and two or three others who were ill at the time should be allowed to have meals at the Math on that day. He bade them go out for Mâdhukari Bhikshâ, or beg handfuls of rice and other foodstuff from the villagers and cook for themselves under the trees in the Math grounds. They were forbidden to go to their friends in Calcutta, from whom they might expect to have a hearty dinner. He spared none, not even the greatest of his Gurubhais, whom he otherwise treated with a special reverence. In order to ensure obedience, he

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ordered the one in charge of the store-room not to supply cooking materials that day. So most of them were obliged to go out for begging their food. But he could not bear to see his dear ones and those whom he respected begging their food, and he left for Calcutta on the pretext of business. He returned to the Math the next day, full of added love and kindness, and laughed at the queer experiences of some, or the better success of others, and rejoiced at the warm welcome and the sumptuous feast which some had received from some Marwari merchants of Salkhia, three miles distant from the monastery.

The days passed as though they were hours. Whatever the mood in which the Swami might be, for his Gurubhais and disciples his presence was in itself a constant source of joy and inspiration. Whether he was impatient, whether he reprimanded, whether he was exacting or unreasonable, whether he was the Teacher or the meditating Sage, whether he was full of mirth or grave,—to his Gurubhais he was always the *beloved* “Naren,” and to his disciples the blessed and incomparable Guru. A well-known preacher speaking of the Swami in these days says :

“At this time he began to feel that he had finished his public work and had delivered to the world the message of his blessed Master, Sri Ramakrishna. The inexhaustible energy and power that were working through the form now made him turn his attention to another work, the work of training the disciples and moulding the character of those that had gathered round him, by his living example as well as by his soul-stirring spiritual instructions. Silently ignoring his world-wide fame, he lived unostentatiously in the quiet monastery on the bank of the Ganges, sometimes playing the part of a Guru or spiritual teacher, sometimes that of a father, sometimes even that of a schoolmaster. Man-making was now the ideal of our illustrious Swami. He held classes on the Vedas and the grammar of Pânini, sat in meditation with the monks morning and evening, and received visitors from various parts of India. . . . His relation with those who came to him was of the

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kindest character. His all-embracing love was truly divine. To the visitors he was a personification of humility. . . . Through a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate masses of India, through a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity, and through true patriotism and thorough self-sacrificing zeal that did not know what fatigue was, he showed to his disciples how a God-inspired soul felt and worked for humanity. Like a cloud in the rainy season that silently deluges the world with water, he now worked silently and proved to his disciples that he was a real worker who *felt* the universal brotherhood of man, who did not talk much, who did not make little sects for universal brotherhood, but whose acts, whose whole body, whose movements, whose walking, eating, drinking, whose whole life manifested a true brotherhood of mankind, a real love and sympathy for all. By preaching Vedânta, by living and moving in Vedânta, by cosmopolitan charity, and by the simplicity, purity and holiness of his life, Swami Vivekananda solved the problem of the future of his Motherland by holding before the eyes of his disciples, followers, friends and admirers, nay, before even the whole of India, the ideal of character-building through the light and spirit of Vedânta."

## XL

### MAHASAMADHI

The last two months which the Swami passed on earth were full of events foreshadowing the approaching end, though at the time these events passed by unsuspected by those about him. Every trifling incident had its portent and a host of associations that throbbed with a peculiarly significant meaning. Some time after he had returned from Benares the Swami greatly desired to see all his Sannyâsin disciples, and wrote to them asking them to visit him, if only for a short time. The call came even to those beyond the seas. Some came; others busy at various centres could not avail themselves of what proved later on to be the last opportunity of seeing once again their beloved Leader, to whose cause they had dedicated their whole life and soul. And great indeed was their sorrow then. Oh, if they had but known what the call had meant, they would have left everything to respond to the summons.

Sister Nivedita, writing about it has said: "Many of his disciples from distant parts of the world gathered round the Swami on his return to Calcutta. Ill as he looked, there was none, probably, who suspected how near the end had come. Yet visits were paid and farewells exchanged that it had needed voyages half round the world to make."

Strangely enough, as days passed by, the Swami felt more and more the necessity of withdrawing himself from the task of directing the affairs of the Math, in order to give those that were about him a free hand. "How often," he said, "does a man ruin his disciples,

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by remaining always with them ! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves !” When he spoke thus, it invariably caused pain to those who loved him. They felt that if he should go, it would mean a terrible blow to the work. But there were times in his deep meditation, when the Swami cared for nothing but Infinite Repose. Work and all other bonds were dropping off; more than ever did he withdraw himself from all outer concerns. Meditation became his one great occupation. The Master and the Mother were constantly in his mind. A great Tapasyâ and meditation had come upon him and he was making ready for death. His Gurubhais and disciples became very anxious at seeing their beloved Leader retire into such an atmosphere of austerity and meditation. The prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna that Naren would merge in the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi at the end of his work, when he would realise who and what he really was and refuse to remain in the body, constantly haunted their memory. “Not long before his departure,” writes Sister Nivedita, “some of his brother-monks were one day talking over the old days, and one of them asked him quite casually, ‘Do you know yet who you were, Swamiji?’ His unexpected reply, ‘Yes, I know now!’ awed them into silence, and none dared to question him further.”

Everything about him in these days was so deliberate and full of meaning that it seemed strange that no one apprehended the true import. They must have been deceived by the Swami’s cheerful bearing, and by the fact that since the beginning of June he seemed to have become himself again.

One day, about a week before the end, the Swami bade his disciple, Swami Suddhananda, to bring the

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Bengali almanac to him. On getting it, he turned over several pages of it beginning at that day and kept it in his room. He was seen several times on subsequent days studying the almanac intently, as if he was undecided about something he wanted to know. Only after he had passed away was the significance of this incident understood by his sorrowing Gurubhais and disciples; then they realised that he had decided to throw off the bondage of the body on a certain day, and the day he chose of all others was the Fourth of July!

Three days before his passing away, as he was walking up and down on the spacious lawn of the monastery in the afternoon with Swami Premananda, the Swami pointed to a particular spot on the bank of the Ganges, and said to him gravely, "When I give up the body, cremate it there!" On that very spot stands today a temple in his honour.

Sister Nivedita, introducing many significant facts in connection with the Swami's passing away and his foreknowledge of it, writes:

'When June closed, however, he knew well enough that the end was near. 'I am making ready for death!' he said to one who was with him, on the Wednesday before he died. 'A great Tapasya and meditation has come upon me, and I am making ready for death!'

"And we who did not dream that he would leave us, till at least some three or four years had passed, knew nevertheless that the words were true. News of the world met but a far-away rejoinder from him at this time. Even a word of anxiety as to the scarcity of the rains, seemed almost to pass him by as in a dream. It was useless to ask him now for an opinion on the questions of the day. 'You may be right,' he said quietly, 'but I cannot enter any more into these matters. I am going down into death!'

"Once in Kashmir, after an attack of illness, I had seen him lift a couple of pebbles, saying, 'Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor

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doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*'—and the stones struck one another in his hand—'for I *have* touched the Feet of God!'

'Personal revelation was so rare with him, that these words could never be forgotten. Again, on returning from the cave of Amarnath, in that same summer of 1898, had he not said, laughingly, that he had there received the grace of Amarnath—not to die till he himself should will to do so? Now this, seeming to promise that death would never take him by surprise, had corresponded so well with the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna—that when he should know who and what he was, he would refuse to remain a moment longer in the body—that one had banished from one's mind all anxiety on this score, and even his own grave and significant words at the present time did not suffice to revive it.

'Did we not remember, moreover, the story of the great Nirvikalpa Samādhi of his youth, and how, when it was over, his Master had said, 'This is your mango. Look! I lock it in my box. You shall taste it once more, when your work is finished!'

'—And we may wait for that,' said the monk who told me the tale. 'We shall know when the time is near. For he will tell us that again he has tasted his mango.'

'How strange it seems now, looking back on that time, to realise in how many ways the expected hint was given, only to fall on ears that did not hear, to reach minds that could not understand!

'It would seem, indeed, that in his withdrawal from all weakness and attachment, there was one exception. That which had ever been dearer to him than life, kept still its power to move him. It was on the last Sunday before the end that he said to one of his disciples, 'You know the Work is always my weak point! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!'

'On Wednesday of the same week, the day being Ekādashi, and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning meal to the same disciple. Each dish as it was offered—boiled seeds of the jack-fruit, boiled potatoes, plain rice, and ice-cold milk—formed the subject of playful chat; and finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands, and dried them with a towel.

'It is I who should do these things for you, Śwamiji!'

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Not you for me!' was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity—'Jesus washed the feet of His disciples!'

"Something checked the answer, 'But that was the *last* time' as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered. This was well. For here also, the last time had come.

"There was nothing sad or grave about the Swami during these days. In the midst of anxiety about over-fatiguing him, in spite of conversation deliberately kept as light as possible, touching only upon the animals that surrounded him, his garden experiments, books and absent friends, over and beyond all this, one was conscious the while of a luminous presence, of which his bodily form seemed only as a shadow, or symbol. Never had one felt so strongly as now, before him, that one stood on the threshold of an infinite light. Yet none was prepared, least of all on that last happy Friday, July the 4th, on which he appeared so much stronger and better than he had been for years, to see the end so soon."

On the day of the Mahâsamâdhi itself, whether consciously or intuitively, his actions were most deliberate and full of meaning. His solitary meditation for three hours in the morning from eight to eleven was the most striking. He rose rather early that day and after partaking of his tea entered the chapel of the monastery. After some time it was noticed that he had closed all the windows and had bolted all the doors. What transpired there, no one will ever know. In his meditation his own Master and the Divine Mother,—to his own realisation One and the Same Personality,—must have been present, for when he had finished he broke forth in a touching song in which the Highest Jnâna mingled with the Highest Bhakti.

Descending the stairs of the shrine, he walked backwards and forwards in the courtyard of the monastery, his mind withdrawn. Suddenly the tenseness of his thought expressed itself in a whisper loud enough to be heard by Swami Premananda who was



near by. The Swami was saying to himself: "If there were another Vivekananda, he would have understood what Vivekananda has done! And yet,—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!!" This remark startled his Gurubhai, for never did the Swami speak thus, save when the flood-gates of his soul were thrown open and the Living Waters of the Highest Consciousness rushed forth.

Another unusual incident took place when the Swami, who was not in the habit of taking his food with his Gurubhais and disciples, dined with them in the refectory. Still more strange was his relish of food. He had never felt better, he said.

This same Friday morning he expressed a desire to have the Kâli Pujâ performed at the monastery on the following day, that being an auspicious day for the worship of the Mother. Soon after, Swami Ramakrishnananda's father, a devout worshipper of Kali, came. On seeing him, the Swami was delighted and explaining his intention to him, he called Swamis Suddhananda and Bodhananda and instructed them to secure all the necessities for the intended ceremony, which they hastened to do.

The Swami then asked Swami Suddhananda to fetch the *Sukla Yajur Veda* from the library. When the latter had brought it, the Swami asked him to read therefrom the Mantra beginning with the words, "Sushumnah Suryarasmih," with the commentary on it. The disciple read the Sloka together with the commentary. When he had finished a part of it, the Swami remarked, "This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation of the word 'Sushumnâ,' the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in the later ages, speak of as the Sushumnâ nerve channel in the body, is contained

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here, in this Vedic Mantra. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these Slokas and make original reflections and commentaries on the Sâstras.”

The passage above referred to is the fortieth Sloka in the eighteenth chapter of Madhyandini recension of the *Vâjasaneyi Samhita* of the *Sukla Yajur Veda*, and runs as follows:

सुषुम्णाः सूर्यरश्मिश्चन्द्रमागन्धर्वस्तस्य नक्षत्रायप्सरसो भेकुरयो  
नाम । सनश्चंद्राक्षतत्रं पातु तस्मै स्वाहा वाट् ताभ्य स्वाहा ॥

The purport of Mahidhara's commentary on this may be put as follows:

“That Chandra (Moon) who is of the form of Gandharva, who is Sushumnâ, that is, giver of supreme happiness to those who perform sacrifices (Yajnas), and whose rays are like the rays of the Sun,—may that Chandra protect us Brâhmanas and Kshatriyas! We offer our oblations to him (Svâhâ vât! His (Chandra's) Apsarâs are the stars, who are illuminators (hence called Bhekurayas)—we offer our oblations to them (Svâhâ)! ”

At 1 p.m., a quarter of an hour after the midday repast, the Swami entered the Brahmachârins' room and called them to attend the class on Sanskrit grammar. One who attended this class writes:

“The class lasted for nearly three hours. But no monotony was felt. For he (the Swami) would tell a witty story, or make *bon mots* now and then to lighten his teachings, as he was wont to do. Sometimes the joke would be with reference to the wording of a certain Sutra, or he would make an amusing play upon its words knowing that the fun would make it easier for recollection. On this particular day, he spoke of how he had coached his college friend,

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Dasarathi Sanyal, in English history, in one night by following a similar process. He, however, appeared a little tired after the grammar class.

Some time later, the Swami, accompanied by Swami Premananda, went out for quite a long walk, as far as the Belur Bazaar. He spoke with his Gurubhai on many interesting subjects, and particularly on his proposed scheme of founding a Vedic college in the monastery. In order to gain a clearer view of what the Swami felt on the matter, Swami Premananda asked, "What, Swami, will be the good of studying the Vedas?" To this the Swami replied,—“It will kill out superstitions!”

Returning to the Math the Swami talked for a while with the monks. Oh, if they had but known that these were the last words they would ever hear from the lips of their beloved and blessed Leader, their all in all!

As evening came on, the Swami's mind became more and more withdrawn, and when the bell for the evening service rang, he retired in the evening stillness to his own room. There he sat in meditation facing the Ganges. What occurred on that memorable day has been best told in detail by some members of the Order, and a few of these different versions about the passing of the Swami are given below.

That written by Swami Saradananda on July 24, to Dr. Logan, the President of the San Francisco Vedânta Society, reads:

“ . . . We sent a cable to the New York Vedânta Society with directions to communicate to you, and to all friends in the United States, about the Nirvâna of our beloved Swami Vivekananda. He entered into the Life Eternal on July 4, Friday evening at ten minutes past nine. It came upon us so suddenly that even the Swamis in the rooms next to his in the Math had not the slightest intimation of it. The Swami was

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meditating in his own room at 7 p.m., leaving word that none was to come to him until called for. An hour after, he called one of us and requested him to fan his head. He lay down on his bed quietly and the one tending him thought he was either sleeping or meditating. An hour after, his hands trembled a little and he breathed once very deeply. Then all was quiet for a minute or two. Again he breathed in the same manner, his eyes becoming fixed in the centre of his eyebrows and his face assuming a divine expression, and all was over.

"All through the day he felt as free and easy as possible, nay, freer than what he had felt for the last six months. He meditated in the morning for three hours at a stretch, took his meals with a perfect appetite, gave talks on Sanskrit grammar, philosophy and on the Vedas to the Swamis at the Math for more than two hours and discoursed on the Yoga philosophy. He walked in the afternoon for about two miles, and on returning enquired after every one very tenderly. While resting for a time he conversed on the rise and fall of nations with his companions, and then went into his own room to meditate—you know the rest."

### A monastic disciple of the Swami writes :

"The Mahâsamâdhi took place a few minutes after nine p. m. The supper bell had just been rung when the inmates were called to see what had happened to the Swami. Swamis Premananda and Nischayananda began to chant aloud the name of the Master, believing that he might be brought to consciousness thereby. But he lay there in his room on his back, motionless, and the course proved fruitless. Swami Advaitananda asked Swami Bodhananda to feel the Swami's pulse. After a vain attempt for a while, he stood up and began to cry aloud. Swami Advaitananda then told Nirbhayananda, 'Alas, what are you looking on! Hasten to Dr. Mahendra Nath Mazumdar and bring him here as soon as you can.' Another crossed the river and went to Calcutta to give information to Swamis Brahmaranda and Saradananda who were there on that day, and bring them to the Math. They arrived at about half past ten. The doctor examined him thoroughly, found life suspended, and tried to bring him back by artificial respiration. At midnight the doctor pronounced life extinct. Dr. Mazumdar said that it might have been due to sudden heart-failure. Dr. Bipin Bihari Ghosh who came from Calcutta the next day said that it was due

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to apoplexy. But none of the doctors who came afterwards and heard of the symptoms could agree. Whatever they might say, the monks of the Math have the unshakable conviction that the Swami had voluntarily cast off the body in Samādhi, when he did not want to remain any longer in the world, as predicted by Sri Ramakrishna.

"Sister Nivedita came in the morning. She sat all the while by the Swami and fanned him, till the body was brought down at 2 p.m. to the porch leading to the courtyard, where the Aratrika was performed before taking it to the spot which had been indicated by the Swami himself for cremation."

A Gurubhai of the Swami writes in the *Udbodhan*:

"... He next meditated from 8 to 11 a.m. in the shrine. On other days he never meditated so long at one sitting. Nor could he meditate in an unventilated room, with doors and windows shut; but on this day he meditated after having shut and bolted all the doors and windows of the chapel.

"After meditation he began to sing a beautiful song on Shyāmā (Mother Kali). The monks below were charmed to hear the sweet strains of it coming from the shrine-room. The song ran thus, 'Is my Mother dark,—the dark-featured Mother, who has dishevelled hair, illumines the lotus of the heart! . . . .'"

"He took his noonday meal that day with great relish. After meals he taught the disciples *Laghukaumudi*, a standard work on Sanskrit grammar, for more than two hours and a half. Then in the afternoon he took a walk for nearly two miles with a Gurubhai. For many days past he could not walk so far. He said he was very well that day. In the course of the walk he expressed his particular desire to establish a Vedic school in the Math. After returning from the walk, he attended to some personal needs and afterwards said that he felt very light in body. After conversation for some time, he went to his own room and told one of his disciples to bring him his rosary. Then, asking the disciple to wait outside, he sat down to tell his beads and meditate in the room alone. He had thought of worshipping Kali the next day, which was a Saturday with Amāvasyā. He had talked much about this that day.

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"After meditating and telling his beads for about an hour he laid himself down on his bed on the floor, and calling the disciple who was waiting outside, asked him to fan his head a little. He had the rosary still in his hand. The disciple thought the Swami was perhaps having a light sleep. About an hour later, his hand shook a little. Then came two deep breaths. The disciple thought he fell into Samâdhi. He then went downstairs and called a Sannyâsin, who came and found on examination that there was neither respiration nor pulse. Meanwhile another Sannyâsin came, and thinking him to be in Samâdhi, began to chant aloud the Master's name continually, but in no way was the Samâdhi broken! That night an eminent physician was called in. He examined the body for a long time and afterwards said that life was extinct.

"The next morning it was found that the eyes were bloodshot and that there was a little bleeding through the mouth and the nostrils. Other doctors remarked that it was due to the rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain. This clearly leads to the conclusion that in the process of Japa and meditation, his Brahmarandhra must have been pierced when he left the body!

"After his Mahâsamâdhi several doctors came and examined his body minutely and tried to bring him back to consciousness. They exhausted all the means and methods that they knew of rousing him but to no avail. They could not, in point of fact, make out the real cause of his death. He died, in truth, of his own accord. He was born a Yogi and he died a Yogi!"

### Still another version reads:

"... For a month before his passing away, the Swami used to meditate much more than usual; and on these days it seemed as if he had no disease in the body. . . . On this day before going for the afternoon walk with Swami Premananda he talked with him in a merry mood on various topics concerning the West. In the evening he went up to his room to meditate. After some time the Swami called in a disciple and asked him to open all the windows of the room as it was warm and to fan him. Next he laid himself down on the bedding on the floor. After the Brahmachârin had gently fanned him at the head for a while, the Swami said to him, 'All right; no more need of fanning! It would be better if you rubbed my feet a little.' Saying this, he seemed to have fallen asleep shortly after. In this way an hour passed; the

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disciple was rubbing him; the Swami was lying on his left side. He changed sides once within this time, and shortly after that, he cried in exactly the same way as babies cry out in dreams. The Brahmachârin noticed a little after this, that the Swami breathed a deep breath, and his head rolled down the pillow. Another long deep breath like the preceding one, and then all was calm and still about him like death! The tired child slept in the lap of the Mother, whence there was no awakening to this world of Mâyâ!

“The Swami passed away at the age of thirty-nine years, five months and twenty-four days, thus fulfilling a prophecy which was frequently on his lips, ‘I shall never live to see forty.’ ”

A bolt from the blue could not have been more startling than the news of the death of Swami Vivekananda. Nothing could have been more appalling or unexpected. The monks at the monastery at Belur were struck dumb; they were stupefied at the thought of their bitter, irreparable loss. The monastery was shrouded in gloom.

In the morning people poured into the monastery from all sides. Carriages passed through the monastery gate and boats arrived at the Ghat bringing in a large number of passengers. Sadness reigned everywhere. The body lay in state in the room which only a day or two ago rang with the laughter and stirring eloquence of the inspired monk. Hundreds passed before the body in solemn silence, their eyes debating whether he was dead. Then they turned in a tempest of abandoned grief, from the lifeless form of him whom they had loved more than their own life, saying, “Is our Swami really gone?” And one looking at the face of Swami Vivekananda on this day, vowed then and there to devote his life thenceforth solely to the service of his country.

Not since the passing of their Master, Sri Ramakrishna, had the monks known such a bereavement. Never before had that undying scene of the cremation

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of the body of their Master at the burning-ghat in Baranagore, on the opposite bank of the Ganges, been brought so forcibly to their minds. They felt that the bottom had fallen out of everything. When the Master himself had passed away, he had given them to Naren's charge. Now that both had left the mortal plane, the monks felt themselves as strangers in the caravanserai of this world.

In spite of the conclusion of learned doctors, there was a half-mad and unreasonable hope that Swami Vivekananda might, after all, return to mortal consciousness. *Perhaps* this was the very highest Samâdhi; *perhaps* he might return from it. For this reason the body was left within the room upstairs until a late hour of the next day. But every moment the body became colder and more rigid and all were convinced beyond doubt that the Soul had sped forever into the regions of Everlasting Light and Life. When they were forced to believe that he was physically no more, the elder monks despatched some of the disciples to Calcutta to herald the news. Some were sent to telegraph the message to different parts of India and the world. Some were sent for sandalwood, incense, flowers, etc. Incense was burned in many quarters of the monastery. The monastery grounds were crowded with people. Everyone in the monastery felt that this was the last time that they could have a look at the blessed form of the Prophet, who had preached the Modern Gospel to many peoples of near and distant lands, whose greatness had been felt everywhere.

Towards the afternoon the body was brought downstairs to the porch in front of the courtyard. There on a cot it lay, wrapped in the robes symbolic of poverty of the Sannyâsin. The soles of his feet were painted over with Âltâ, a kind of crimson pigment,



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and impressions were taken of them on muslin, to be preserved as sacred mementos. Then the Arati service was performed, this being the last rite of worship to that form which had been the instrument for the revelation of the Highest Truth. Lights were waved, Mantras were recited, conch-shells were blown, bells were rung and incense was burned. At the end of the ceremony some bowed low, others fell prostrate on the ground in salutation, and those who were disciples, touched with their heads the feet of their Blessed Master's earthly form.

A procession was formed, and the cot upon which the body rested was slowly lifted. Again and again arose the thrilling shouts of "*Jaya Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jaya! Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajjiki Jaya,*" from the depths of the devotee's hearts.

The procession moved slowly through the courtyard across the spacious lawn, until it reached the Bilva tree which stands in the south-eastern corner of the grounds. There, slightly ahead and to the left, on the very spot where the Swami himself had desired his body to be cremated, the funeral pyre was built.

Finally the body was placed upon the funeral pyre by the monks and devotees. Reeds were lighted, and along with the monks scores of persons lighted the pyre until it was all ablaze.

In the deep dusk the flames died down, and in the souls of those who stood about, an intense calm prevailed. And when the flames had died out and the body had returned to its original elements, leaving only burning coals and smouldering embers behind, the monks poured Ganges water upon the pyre, and in the darkness their prayers went up to the Lord for guidance and protection. A great, great peace came,—and utmost resignation! All felt that the Lord knew best; and in their sorrow, they said

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in the depths of their hearts, "O Lord! Thy will be done!"

The next day, the monks gathered the sacred relics for themselves and the future generations. Today a temple stands upon the very spot. An altar has been built, and upon it a marble likeness of the Master has been placed. And here the monks are wont to pray and meditate in the silence of their inmost heart. The table of the altar stands on the very spot on which the body of the great Swami rested in the flames. Some of the relics are kept here, and a copper receptacle near the altar of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine contains the rest.

True, the monks and the lay disciples of the Order were still grief-stricken, but their faith in and resignation to their Lord with the resulting peace had taken away the sting of death. Deep beneath the veils of sorrow, all were aware that this was not the end. Emptiness dwelt in the monastery, but within the silence and illumination of their hearts, all were conscious of the fact that life in the soul, such as their Leader lived, could not have remained long shut up within the prison-walls of earthly existence, and that his constantly mounting realisation in its increasing intensity must have burned the body-consciousness and soared beyond the grasp of death in Nirvikalpa Samâdhi. And across the sad event of the passing of his presence from the world, the words he spoke in times long before his death, ring out with a triumphant meaning. "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God!" And that inspiration has come. And now that it has come it shall remain with the sons of men

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until the whole world attains the consummation of the Highest Truth. Aye, he scorned Mukti for himself until he could lead all beings in the universe to its portals. Vision and Realisation are imperishable. Being of the Truth they are eternal. And he is eternal,—he has Eternity in the palm of his hand, as it were,—who has found the Truth. And the notes of Freedom and Realisation are heard beyond the boundaries of life and death; and with the numerous devotees, the apostles and disciples of the Modern Gospel,—the prophets and the saints and seers of the Sanâtana Dharma,—the Voice of India is heard and shall resound down the distant centuries in those shouts of praise and triumph,—

*Jaya Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jaya!*

*Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajjiki Jaya!*

*Jaya Sri Sanâtana Dharmaki Jaya!*

And the benediction of the Most High rests now over the world anew. The flames of the Sanâtana Dharma have been re-kindled. Truly, gods have walked amongst the sons of men! Verily the Lord Himself, Truth Itself, was embodied as Ramakrishna-Vivekananda for the good of the world. The spirit of India herself had been made flesh; and they, the twin-souls who were born once more to awaken her, the great mother of religions, have passed from the flesh into the silence of the infinite, having fulfilled their mission and given the message. Verily, the divine Mother Herself, the destroyer of illusion and the giver of the waters of life, has walked upon the earth; and the sun of Brahman has bathed the world with its rays anew, scattering the clouds of darkness and ignorance, spreading the light of the celestial effulgence! And the ends of the world have met and the gospel of the age has been preached to the nations of the world. And the luminous spirits,

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who were the founder and the prophet of the new gospel, came because religion had declined and unrighteousness had prevailed. And they are to come again and again for the good of the world, for the establishment of righteousness, for the re-interpretation of the Sanâtana Dharma, and for the manifestation of the kingdom which is not of this world, the passport to which is the motto:

“Renounce! Renounce! Realise the Divine Nature! Arise! Awake! and stop not till the Goal is reached!”

HARI OM TAT SAT!



THE END

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